SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BURNING OF BOYS' SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA IN 2016

By

Hildah Bochere Oburu

Dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Prof. Leslie Swartz
Co-supervisor: Dr Bronwyné Coetzee

March 2020

Declaration

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

This dissertation includes one manuscript accepted for publication and four manuscripts submitted for review to various peer-reviewed journals. The development and writing of the five papers were my sole responsibility, and for each manuscript where this is not the case, a declaration is included in the dissertation indicating the nature of the contributions made by my co-authors.

March 2020

Abstract

School arson, predominantly the burning of dormitories in boarding secondary schools in Kenya, is a recurrent problem. In 2016, the school fires crisis seemed to reach a new height. A total of 239 schools experienced arson. Most of these schools were boys' secondary schools. Discussions on school fires are often carried out in the print media, and the fires have been a subject of four government taskforce investigations, with little or no effect on the recurrence. Most of what is written about school fires in Kenya, through government reports, print media, and (for the 2016 school fires) social media, is based on the views of people outside the school system and whose views are not based on lived experiences. Using social representations theory, the aim of this exploratory, inductive study was to explore understandings of school arson in government reports, print and social media, and also by investigating the views of insiders to the school system (students, parents and teachers).

A library search was used to source documents (government reports and newspaper articles) and simple search and real-time tracking for social media posts. Extreme case sampling was used to select four boys' schools and purposive sampling to select focus group participants (32 teachers, 32 students and 32 parents) from the four schools. A thematic analysis of secondary data and focus group discussions revealed that school arson is a complex phenomenon with multiple understandings and that, so far, the discourse had been dominated by the 'outsider' views. However, the discourse across data sets extended beyond the specifics of school arson and revealed an overarching underlying concern: the loss of African culture due to Western influences and international conventions that clash with the reality of the cultural context, and a quest for a constructed authentic Kenyan identity in the postcolonial context. I discuss the implications of these understandings both for further work on school fires and for broader considerations regarding the future of education in Kenya.

Opsomming

Brandstigting by skole, spesifiek die afbrand van hoërskoolkoshuise in Kenia, is ’n herhalende probleem. In 2016 wou dit voorkom asof die krisis rondom skoolbrande ’n nuwe hoogtepunt bereik. Altesaam 239 skole het brandstigting beleef. Die meeste van hierdie skole was hoërskole vir seuns. Terwyl debatte oor skoolbrande gereeld in die gedrukte media gevoer word, en die brande die onderwerp van vier ondersoeke deur regeringstaakgroepe was, het dit weinig of geen uitwerking nie op die herhalende voorkoms daarvan gehad. Die meeste geskrewe materiaal oor skoolbrande in Kenia, onder meer in regeringsverslae, die gedrukte media en (vir die 2016-skoolbrande) op sosiale media, is gebaseer op die sienings van mense buite die skolestelsel, wie se siening nie op geleefde ervarings berus nie. Die doel van hierdie verkennende induktiewe studie is om sosiale verteenwoordigingsteorie te gebruik om die insigte rondom skoolbrandstigting in regeringsverslae, die gedrukte media en op sosiale media te ondersoek, asook om die siening van diegene binne die skolestelsel (studente, ouers en onderwysers) noukeurig na te vors.

’n Biblioteeksoektog is gebruik om dokumente (regeringsverslae en koerantartikels) te bekom, terwyl eenvoudige soektogte en intydse naspeuring vir sosiale media-inskrywings gebruik is. Ekstremegeval-steekproefneming is gebruik om vier seunskole te kies, terwyl doelgerigte steekproefneming gebruik is om fokusgroepdeelnemers (32 onderwysers, 32 studente en 32 ouers) uit die vier skole te kies. ’n Tematiese ontleding van sekondêre data en fokusgroepbesprekings het dit aan die lig gebring dat brandstigting ’n komplekse verskynsel is, dat dit op veelvuldige wyses verstaan word, en dat die diskoers tot dusver deur ‘buitestaanders’ oorheers is. Die diskoers oor datastelle heen strek egter verder as die besonderhede van skoolbrandstigting en toon ’n oorkoepelende onderliggende kommer: die verlies aan Afrika-kultuur weens Westerse invloede en internasionale konvensies wat met die

realiteit van die kulturele konteks bots, sowel as ’n soeke na ’n gekonstrueerde outentieke Keniaanse identiteit in die postkoloniale konteks. Ek bespreek die implikasies van hierdie insigte vir verdere werk op die gebied van skoolbrande, asook vir breër oorwegings rakende die toekoms van die onderwys in Kenia.

Acknowledgements

I am thankful to the Almighty God for my good health and the good health of my family that gave me peace of mind to complete this PhD journey.

My heartfelt gratitude to my Supervisors, Professor Leslie Swartz and Dr Bronwyné Coetzee, fondly referred to as "Mummy's teachers" in my household. I am grateful for the opportunity to be mentored by, and to learn from both of you. I couldn't have asked for better supervisors. I am grateful to Prof. Swartz for believing in me and for patiently guiding me through a very complex study. I am thankful to Dr Coetzee for the expert guidance and patience in coding a massive data set and for teaching me everything I know about ATLAS.ti. Thank you both for the patience and psychosocial support, especially when I had to put writing on hold to go home and check on my family. I am most grateful. Your role modelling has made me a better academic. Akhsanteni sana.

I am also grateful for the funding from the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University, which allowed me to enrol in this PhD programme. I benefitted a lot from the training and workshops conducted by the graduate school. To the members of the 2017 cohort, thank you for the camaraderie.

To the department of Psychology, Stellenbosch University, thank you for all the opportunities that were provided for learning, career growth and networking.

I extend further thanks to my employer, the University of Nairobi, for granting me paid study leave. Thank you for investing in me. My gratitude also goes to my colleagues at the Department of Psychology, University of Nairobi, for taking over all the work that I left pending- especially submitting marks and handling my students – as I proceeded for study leave. Thank you.

I am also grateful to the reviewers who reviewed my articles and the editors of the various journals to which I submitted my manuscripts for the feedback, which has helped this study and added quality to this dissertation. My sincere gratitude to my former student,

Margaret, for transcription services. Thank you for your diligence. I am most grateful to Jacqueline Gamble for editing services.

My heartfelt gratitude to my beloved husband for the love, support and encouragement throughout my postgraduate studies (both at Masters and now at PhD). Thank you especially for encouraging me to take up studies despite having a two- and half-year-old baby. You have done a wonderful job. Further thanks to my children, for their unyielding love, the prayers, the countless mugs of coffee, for keeping me cool, calm and collected when a deadline was approaching, and for all the smiles. I am most grateful to you for acting as a sounding board for my ideas about the school experience in Kenya and for the insights you provided about social media use.

I am grateful to all my family and friends who spared time to run errands for my children when I was not around. I am thankful to my sisters and sisters-in-law for creating time to attend my children's school functions. My gratitude also goes to members of my extended family, who took turns to stay with my children from time to time. May you be blessed. My friends, Esther, Nereah and Hilda, thank you for being 'on-call' and availing support, 'taxi services' and checking on my children. Time and space would not allow me to mention all family members and friends who have supported me in one way or another. I cherish all the support you have accorded me.

To my parents, thank you for calling to check on me and for laying a firm foundation for my academic journey.

I am grateful to the Stellenbosch University Seventh Day Adventist church members for the warm fellowship and prayers.

I extend further gratitude to the journalists, friends, parents and teachers who kept me updated on the new school fires, ongoing debates, news clips and other content related to

school fires. You kept my story current and clarified my thoughts as I conducted the study. I am also most grateful to the students from the four schools involved in this study for willingly sharing their stories and experiences with me. You made this study worthwhile. Thank you all.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my loving husband, Torore,

and my beloved children, Nyaboke, Moraa, Kerubo and Omuya

whose sacrifice, love, encouragement and support kept me going.

Table of contents

List of figures

List of Tables

Abbreviations

EFA	Education For All
ECDE	Early Childhood Development Education
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KNEC	Kenya National Examinations Council
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NACOSTI	National Commission for Technology and Innovation
UPE	Universal Primary Education

Figure 1:Dormitory on fire

The most tangible of all visible mysteries – fire.

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859)

PART 1

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

School violence has existed as long as formal schooling has existed (Midlarsky & Klain, 2005, p.54). Despite this fact, violence connected to schools is disconcerting to teachers, parents, students and the community because schools are commonly considered safe spaces for children (Kupchik & Bracy, 2009, p.136). Not all forms of school violence capture attention, particularly media attention: it is the high-profile incidents of school violence (Jimerson, Hart, & Renshaw, 2012, p.3). With reference to the American context, Muschert

& Sumiala (2012) have noted that "school shootings make and break the news" (p. xvii). Whereas America and much of the Western world grapples with school shootings, Kenya grapples with the recurrent problem of school arson.

News headlines such as: **"A burning question: why are Kenyan students setting fire to their schools"**, **"Arsonists torching schools in Kenya to protest education reform"**, **"Kenya's school arson attacks lead to national debate"** and **"42 students charged with arson "** became the norm in Kenya between January and August 2016. By August 2016, more than 120 schools, according to the UNICEF Representative in Kenya, had been set on fire in that year (Schultink, 2016, pp.1). The final tally of school fires reported in 2016 was 239, with 219 fires happening within the second term (May to August) of the school calendar (Republic of Kenya, 2016). School unrest characterized by disobedience, destruction of property and arson was not a new phenomenon in Kenya. An analysis and mapping out of reports on the locations of school fires in the two leading daily newspapers, *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, from 2000 to 2018 reveals the widespread nature of school fires across the years as summarised in the map (Figure 2) below:

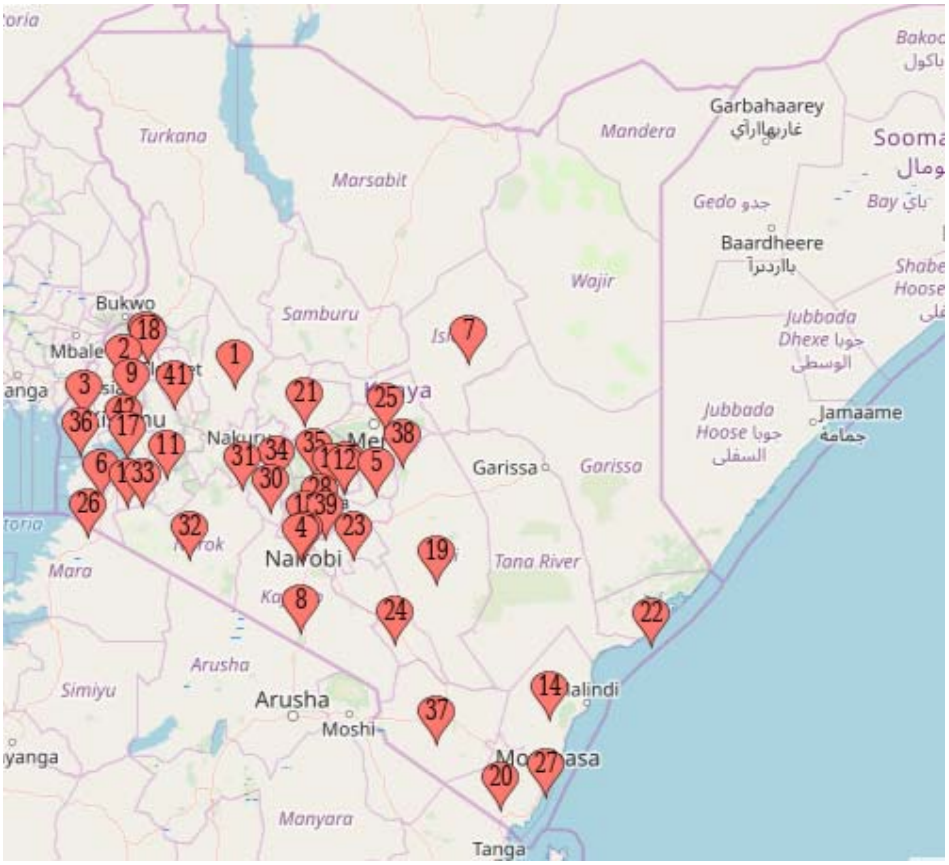


Figure 2: Location of school fires

© https://www.mapcustomizer.com/map/School%20fires_Locations

The severity, frequency and intensity of the incidents of school fires drew outrage, condemnation and consequently national as well as international debate on what could be the cause of such wanton destruction of property. The debate, too, on the causes of these incidents of school violence was not new. It had been a recurrent debate.

1.1. Motivation for the Study

Every year, since 2003, I have taught the *Psychology of Learning and Teaching* course at the School of Education (University of Nairobi) to student teachers. The course is offered during the May-August semester. This semester coincides with the second term of the school calendar. School unrest, more often than not accompanied by arson, is experienced during the second term. The period of arson is so predictable that print media journalists have coined a term for it - “the curse of the second term” (Ngwiri, 2018).

At the start of each semester, I ask my students to explain why they would like to become teachers. The enthusiasm to become teachers has continued to decline over the years, and their reasons for not going into teaching after graduation have become more and more gloomy. They give me reasons such as "children are too undisciplined" and "lack of energy to handle school unrest". At the peak of the school fires of 2016, my students felt schools were no longer safe working places. One of the students said, "they will burn us". This was one of the gloomiest reasons I had ever heard. I decided to find out why this phenomenon had persisted for so long and has continued to get worse.

1.2. School Violence

The term school violence was rarely used in the 1960s and 1970s (Furlong & Morrison, 2000, p.72). Acts that are now classified as school violence were treated as juvenile delinquency or as a manifestation of anti-social behaviour (Abramovay & Rua, 2002, p.25). Over the years, "school violence" has come to refer to all types of aggressive acts (direct or indirect) that occur within the school context including bullying, victimization, drug abuse, possession of weapons, and extreme aggression that results in loss of life caused by use of weapons or arson. Furlong & Morrison (2000, p.71) have noted that the label "school violence" was first used in 1992 to refer to "…violent and aggressive acts on school campuses" and that it is a "catchall term that has little precision from an empirical-scientific point of view". For instance, Benbenishty, Astor, & Estrada (2008, p.72) have identified seven types of school violence: verbal, social (isolating a student or a group of students), indirect violence (showing a person's private pictures or spreading rumours), physical (fighting, beating or shoving), property related (vandalism and theft), sexual (verbal or physical forms of unwanted sexual behaviours) and weapon related (including the use of knives and guns). The classification covers a wide range of covert and overt forms of violence.

School violence, no matter the type, is disruptive, affecting students, teachers, parents and the community at large (Abramovay and Rua, 2002, p. 292) and it is a worldwide phenomenon (Akiba, LeTendre, Baker, & Goesling, 2002, p.830). It varies in intensity. It can sometimes include the use of guns and other weapons resulting in loss of life, for instance, the 1999 Columbine massacre in America (Hong, Cho, Allen-Meares, & Espelage, 2011, p.861). A range of explanations have been given for school violence including a problematic school culture characterised by conflict and poor quality teacher-student relationships(Marsh, McGee & Williams, 2014, p.28; Peterson, Reece & Skiba, 2001, p.155), students' perception of unfairness in school rules or treatment from teachers (James, Bunch, & Clay-Warner, 2015, p.170) among other ascriptions. Whenever it occurs, there are attempts to understand and explain the causes (Abramovay & Rua, 2002, p.106) and to find ways of preventing violence in future.

1.3. History of School Violence/Unrest in Kenya

The complexity and multifaceted (Furlong &Morrison, 2000, p.71) nature of the term 'school violence' behoves researchers to delimit the meaning of 'school violence' in any study. In this study, the term 'school violence' will be used to refer to occurrences of school unrest characterized by actions intended to disrupt learning activities as well as the use of arson to cause damage to school property, which sometimes leads to loss of life. In addition, the definition of arson will be confined to refer to cases of arson perpetrated by students, mainly the burning down of dormitories in boarding schools.

The first case of student unrest in Kenya was recorded in 1908 at Maseno school when students refused to participate in manual work (a protest against technical education) and instead asked for more reading and writing (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006, p.195). There have been many incidents of student unrest coupled with violence since then. In 1974, for instance, seventy secondary schools experienced student unrest. This upsurge was unprecedented. It

led to a presidential decree banning strikes by workers and students (Kinyanjui, 1976, p.1). The upsurge in school unrest had a history behind it. Between 1968 and 1974, the government had introduced a system of financing local community schools (*harambee* schools initially funded by local community contributions and student fees) and admitting government-sponsored students but still retaining vacancies (*harambee* streams) for the local communities (Kinyanjui, 1976, p.3) This system brought about tension between government-aided and non-government aided students. The tension was one of the main causes of the unrest. Besides, the government-aided students felt the *harambee* schools were not as well equipped as the well-established elite schools, the boarding facilities were poor, and they lacked adequate teaching staff (Kinyanjui, 1976, p.4).

By the last decade of the 20th century, school unrest involved extremely violent acts that led to the destruction of property and loss of life. Two of the worst recorded cases of student unrest that were arson-related happened at Nyeri High School and Kyanguli Secondary School. At Nyeri High School, on the 25th of March, 1999, when students set a prefects' cubicle on fire. It was reported that the prefects were unpopular (Achieng, 2001). The alleged perpetrators were reported to be on a revenge mission. They had been suspended from school for burning the library prefect's desk. They sneaked back to school and set the prefects on fire. Four prefects died as a result of the arson.

In the second case, there was a dormitory fire on the 26th of March, 2001 at Kyanguli Secondary School where more than sixty students perished. Two students, aged sixteen, were the alleged perpetrators. Police investigations revealed they were protesting against bad food and accommodation; misappropriation of school funds and cancellation of the school's examination results due to exam malpractice (BBC News AFRICA, 2001).

1.4. Current Understandings of School Violence

Various attempts have been made to understand school violence in Kenya. I shall deal briefly with each of the categories in turn.

1.4.1. Government reports

The government response to these incidents of school violence is often to appoint a task force to investigate the causes and make recommendations on how to manage the 'crises. An analysis of the four main government taskforce reports: *The Report of the Presidential Committee on Student Unrest and Indiscipline in Kenyan Schools* (alternately referred to as the Sagini Report of 1991), *The Report of the Departmental Committee on Education, Research and Technology on the Inquiry into Students' Unrests and Strikes in Secondary Schools (*Koech Report of 2008*), The Report of the Task Force on Student Discipline and Unrest in Secondary Schools* (Wangai Report of 2001) and *The Report of the Special Investigations Team on Schools Unrest* (Claire Omollo Report of 2016) indicate that the ascribed causes are varied ranging from change of school diet to lack of communication to examinations anxiety to school management style.

There are repetitive broad categories of reasons put forward on the causes of school unrest, just as there are overarching categories of recommendations made as possible solutions to the problem of school unrest and violence. The reports will be briefly summarised by way of background in the results section.

1.4.2. Academic studies: Selected examples

The review of academic studies was restricted to peer-reviewed academic writing, and the review revealed that academic discourse on school arson has been scanty, even though the problem has persisted for over twenty years. The studies also focus on school violence in general with arson mentioned as one of the forms of school unrest. In one study, Kinyanjui

(1976, p.1) sought to find out why the student is often blamed for school violence. The answer to the question remained unclear. However, the findings of the study do include causes of school unrest as well as recommendations such as allowing students to participate in the administration of schools and getting parents to be more involved in the running of schools. Malenya (2016) in another study reports on the analysis of students' lived experiences and concludes that violent protests perpetrated by students in Kenya are a form of self-realisation in which students "…pursue their own empowerment so that they can use the power to humble authorities" (p.81). However, he notes that this only serves to perpetuate the cycle of violence. Lastly, the study by Cooper (2014) has specifically focussed on arson and puts forward an argument that students use arson as an "instrument of power that the structurally weak - like themselves can employ to serve their interests" (p.600).

In summary, the studies reviewed above represent the existing range of ways in which academics have engaged with school violence, including arson in Kenya. The review shows that school arson in Kenya has not been widely reported on in academic writings.

1.4.3. Print media reports

Discourse on the causes of the kind of school violence witnessed in 2016 in Kenya has been prominent in media reports. The causes identified in public discussions were similarly varied, as illustrated by the statements below:

> "We need to address the issue of fear in our schools. We need to create peace in our schools, not fear. We need to have teachers begin to discuss with themselves and students what it is that students are against instead of just meting punishment." …
>
> "Some MPs felt that parents had left discipline to teachers and schools while they pampered their children at home. But teachers, school staff and drug cartels

were also blamed for inciting students to demonstrate." (Oduor & Ayaga, ***The Standard Newspaper***, July, 20th 2016)

The quotes above indicate that public discussion of the phenomenon of school fires was full of conjecture and supposition. What was the cause of fear? What does 'lack of parental guidance' mean? How were such conclusions reached? However, the reasons above do not differ markedly from the reasons suggested by government taskforce reports, other newspaper reports or in academic discourse.

In 2016, however, newspaper reports highlighted another oft-ignored aspect of school violence in Kenya: gender. When it became apparent that more boys' schools experienced arson than girls' schools, the discourse changed, and gender became a focal point. There were newspaper headlines such as, "**Boy child neglect cause of school unrest**"(Akolo, 2016). The story was based on sentiments expressed by a member of the national union of teachers. The official went on to suggest boys were engaging in 'activism' to get attention since everyone was focussing on girls and neglecting them. Such arguments strongly influenced the discussions on the causes of the school fires. This is one of the claims that this study sought to confirm or disconfirm.

1.4.4. Social media

Besides print media, there was also public discussion on the possible causes of school unrest, including the burning of schools in 2016. The discussions were conducted through posts, tweets, hashtags and trending topics. On social media, the discussions ranged from identifying possible causes to the condemnation of school administrators, parents, teachers and government to suggestions on possible solutions.

The discussions were no longer local; they were global. It was through social media platforms that comparisons were made between the burning of schools in Kenya and the

school shootings in America. Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen, & Wollebæk (2013, p.893) have argued that social media allows a local phenomenon to spread by bridging the gap between the local and the global. What was not clear was whether the global nature of the discussion brought about new perspectives into the probable causes and possible solutions.

Another aspect of social media that featured significantly in the discourse on the burning of schools in 2016 was that social media themselves were blamed for fuelling the crisis. There were two arguments: one was that students from schools that had experienced arson were influencing those from schools that had not, and were daring them to burn their schools. The other was that students were engaging in copycat violence. Glenn (2016) had made a similar observation regarding the 2015 #FeesMustFall[1] movement in South Africa. He argued that the reason the movement spread so fast across campuses was that students were communicating with one another and posting WhatsApp messages and Twitter feeds containing images and videos of the protests (p.2). The images encouraged other students to join the protests. In the case of the Kenyan school fires of 2016, it was alleged that students decided to join in the burning of schools because of stories narrated by other students on Facebook, Twitter and in WhatsApp groups. The truth of this assertion could be ascertained only by talking directly to the students.

[1] #FeesMustFall and related movements marked a wave of protest, some of it violent, in South African universities, against a number of features of tertiary education including high fees payable by indigent students.

1.5. Statement of the Problem

School violence in Kenya and arson in particular is a complex recurrent problem with ebbs and flows. School violence undermines the core mission of schools, that is, the socialization and education of the young (Fuchs, 2008, p.20). Malenya (2016, p.69) has noted that the expressed causes of school violence and the recommendations made have remained the same over the years. There could be two possible explanations for this. First, the government relies on the appointment of repeatedly similar task forces to find solutions to the problem. The second possible reason could be the methodology adopted by government taskforce committee members for instance: of visiting the affected schools and conducting oral interviews with students in a public meeting, gathering views from a few handpicked stakeholders and using those views to make recommendations. Sundaram (2013) also contends that research on youth violence focusses on young people's understanding of "existing definitions of violence", but it does not focus on young people's own definition of violence and what influences their acceptance and use of violent behaviour (p.889).

From the foregoing, I postulated that before any future recommendations and attempts at change were made, it was important to understand the various ways in which the phenomenon of school arson is understood in Kenya. This study puts forward a case for a paradigm shift in methodology by adopting a social representations approach towards studying understandings of school violence in Kenya, with special reference to the school fires that occurred in 2016.

1.6. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the understandings of school violence, and arson in particular. The study aimed to explore whether there were differences in the understandings of school arson between the key actors or insiders (students, teachers and

parents) and the understandings presented by outsiders in government reports, print media and social media.

1.7. Scope and Limitations

Due to resource and time constraints, the study focussed on boys' schools mainly because most of the schools that experienced arson were boys' schools. Secondly, many studies on school violence and unrest in Kenya have looked at students, their grievances and reactions as well as made recommendations as if they were one homogeneous group. In their study, Artz, Riecken, MacIntyre, Lam, & Maczewski (2000, p.25) found that boys respond less positively to anti-violence messages than girls and they recommended that violence prevention programmes should be gender-specific to be beneficial (p.33).

Thirdly, the study focussed on boys' schools to avoid the pitfall of "recuperative masculinity" (Foster, Kimmel, & Skelton, 2001, p.5). Recuperative masculinity is the argument that whenever priority is given to girls, boys' needs are subsumed under that priority. The argument has already been used to explain why more boys' schools experienced arson. In a newspaper article by Lungai (2016), a Kenya Secondary School Heads Association official is quoted saying:

> "Over the past years, people have concentrated on the girl-child to such an extent that the boy child is no longer in the picture. The empowering of girls has swallowed up the boys who have not been equally empowered" (p.1)

The official further argued that conditions in girls' schools were much better than those in boys' schools because society has neglected the welfare of boys. However, one of the causes of school violence in Kenya has been poor school facilities. This kind of argument would detract from the findings of this study if comparisons were made between boys and girls because it would seem that girls had no reason to set their schools on fire.

Lastly, I excluded the alleged perpetrators of the school fires from this study because the stigma associated with school arson made it difficult to obtain consent from their parents/guardians.

1.8. Research Questions

1. **What representations of school arson in Kenya have there been in various media?**

    a. What are the social representations of school arson in Kenyan print media generally?

    b. What are the social representations of school arson in Kenyan social media?

2. **What representations of school arson in Kenya are held by key actors in selected boys' schools?**

    a) What are the social representations of arson among a selection of parents of secondary school students in Kenya?

    b) What are the social representations of arson among a selection of secondary school students in Kenya?

    c) What are the social representations of arson among a selection of secondary school teachers in Kenya?

1.9. Research Objectives

The main aim of this study was to understand the different understandings of school arson in Kenya. The specific objectives that would help achieve this aim were:

i. To examine the views presented in government reports on school arson;

ii. To explore the views presented in Kenyan print and social media;

iii. To interrogate the understandings of school arson through lived experiences of students, teachers and parents; and

iv. To explore the differences (if any) between the understandings of school arson presented by outsiders (government reports, print media and social media) and the understandings of insiders (students, teachers and parents)

1.10. Structure and Layout

This dissertation followed the "thesis-by-publication" format. The thesis by publication format presented many advantages for me. Hemmings (2012, p.172) has noted that doctoral graduates who take up teaching positions are often unable to embark on research and publishing due to a heavy teaching load. However, publications are a crucial measure of performance. As I am a researcher returning to a full-time university teaching position, the PhD by publication afforded me an opportunity to publish since publications are an essential component of professional growth.

The other motivating factor for opting for this format was the fact that the recurrent problem of school arson is underrepresented in academic writings. I designed the dissertation in such a way as to contribute to academic discourse on school arson.

A key concern about the PhD by publication format is coherence (Badley, 2009, p.333), that is, the concern that journal articles submitted independently may fail to present a

unified thesis. However, Niven & Grant (2012) have argued that coherence can be achieved through the introductory chapter and a concluding chapter that integrates the published papers into a unified thesis (p.108). This dissertation has been structured with due regard to ensuring that it maintains overall coherence.

This dissertation contains five manuscripts submitted or in the preparation stage for submission to international peer-reviewed journals. The results section also includes a chapter on a brief inductive thematic analysis of government reports. The analysis of government reports is necessary because the discourse on the recurrent problem of school arson often lays blame on the lack of implementation of recommendations made by past task force reports on school unrest. This chapter provides background information on the way school unrest/arson has been dealt with in the past and provides a context for understanding the results presented in the manuscripts. Each of the manuscripts is presented as a separate chapter, with a brief introduction of how it answers a research question and how it is linked to the study presented in the introduction. It is for this reason that the traditional results and discussion sections have been omitted, because each article contains results and discussion sections. The manuscripts may contain inevitable overlaps and repetition in the introductions, the literature reviewed and the methods. This is because of the similarities in the data sets analysed, the procedure for data analysis and references cited in some instances. In other cases, I have found it necessary to repeat content to provide a context to make it easy for the reader to understand. School arson seems to be common in Kenya but not globally. The concluding chapter integrates the papers, and the thematic analysis chapter on government reports together into a unified thesis.

The central aim of this study was to understand the different understandings of the recurrent problem of school arson in Kenya. To achieve this aim, I divided the dissertation into four parts:

1. Part 1 comprises Chapters One, Two and Three, in which I present the introduction, the context of the study, and research design and methodology.
2. Part 2 comprises Chapters Four, Five and Six, in which I present an inductive thematic analysis of school arson in government reports and social representations of school arson in Kenyan print media and social media.
3. Part 3 constitutes Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine in which I present the social representations of school arson among students, teachers and parents as presented in focus group discussions.
4. Part 4 comprises Chapter Ten and Chapter Eleven, where I present my reflections on the study and the conclusion of the study.

In the current chapter, Chapter One, I present the background to the study and review literature on school violence in general as well as the history of school violence in Kenya. I further present the research questions and objectives that guide that guided my study and conclude by presenting the structure of the dissertation. In Chapter Two, I present the context of the study by presenting the key elements of the school system in Kenya, discuss the colonial legacy on the education system and how I have conceptualised the concept of school violence for purposes of this study. In Chapter Three, I present the theoretical approach, research design and methodology. However, there is further detailed review of literature and description of method in the individual results chapters. Part 2 contains a thematic analysis of government reports chapter and two manuscripts (one fully accepted for publication and one submitted for review). In this section, I discuss the outside (etic) view of school arson as presented in government reports and in Kenyan print and social media. Chapter Four provides background information. Chapter Five answers research question 1A while Chapter Six answers research question 1B.

In Part 3, I present the inside (emic) view of school arson held by the key actors (students, teachers and parents). I examine the views held by teachers and parents in Chapter Seven and answer research questions 2A and 2C. In Chapter Eight, I explore the social representations of school arson among a selected group of students and answer research question 2B. Lastly, in Chapter Nine, I explore the views of teachers and students on school arson and answer research questions 2B and 2C. The views of the key actors overlapped, or diverged in an interlinked manner even though the focus group discussions were held separately. It is worth mentioning that the emic/etic or outsider/insider dichotomy is used loosely to refer to proximity in engaging with students and schools and not necessarily to refer those directly affected by the school fires.

Finally, Part 4 is made of Chapter Ten and Chapter Eleven. In Chapter Ten, which is the Reflexivity chapter, I reflect on my research experiences and how my position and identity may have influenced my interaction with my participants, my engagement with the data and the decisions I have made. In Chapter Eleven, I present the conclusion of the study. I will tie-in the findings presented in the results chapters, discuss their implications, discuss the limitations of the study and make recommendations for future research.

In Table 1 below, I summarise the structure and layout of the thesis:

Table 1: Structure and layout of the thesis

Part	Chapter	Topic	Title of Article & Authors	Publication Status
Part 1	1	Introduction		
	2	Context of the Study		
	3	Research Design and Methodology		
Part 2	4	A brief summary of government reports on school arson in Kenya		
	5	Social representations of school arson in Kenyan print media	**Representing school arson in Kenya: An analysis of newspaper reporting** Oburu, H., Coetzee, B., & Swartz, L	Manuscript fully accepted for publication in *Global Media and Communication*
	6	Social representations of school arson in Kenyan social media	**The "School burning Olympics": Social representations of school arson in Kenyan social media** Oburu, H., Coetzee, B. & Swartz, L	Manuscript provisionally accepted by *Journal of Community Psychology* (Special issue on social media and trauma)
Part 3 Section	7	Social representations of school arson among teachers and parents	**"Untie our hands": Teachers' and parents' social representations of school arson in Kenya** Oburu, H., Coetzee, B. & Swartz, L	Manuscript in preparation for submission
	8	Social representations of school arson among students	**"You know how boys are…": Adolescent boys' construction of masculinity and school arson in Kenya** Oburu, H., Coetzee, B. & Swartz, L	Manuscript provisionally accepted by *Men and Masculinities* journal
	9	Social representations of school arson among students and teachers	**School arson in Kenya: Culture, globalisation and the politics of abandonment** Oburu, H., Coetzee, B. & Swartz, L	Manuscript submitted to *Social Dynamics* journal
Part 4	10	Research Experiences and self-reflection		
	11	Conclusion		

NB: My supervisors are my co-authors in these articles based on the ethical publication criteria promulgated by COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics http://publicationethics.org/

1.11. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the background to the study and the rationale for carrying out this research. I have also discussed the research questions and objectives. Lastly, I have outlined the structure of the thesis. I will discuss the context of the study in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.0 Introduction

The discourse on school violence in Kenya, and specifically school arson, often makes reference to the structure and organisation of the school system. In this chapter, I present the organisation of the school system to provide a background that can help readers understand possible links between the schooling experience and the recurrent problem of school arson.

2.1. Structure of the Formal School System in Kenya

In 1985, the system of education in Kenya changed from the one inherited from the British colonial government to the current 8-4-4 educational system. The 8-4-4 system comprises 8 years of primary school, 4 years of secondary school and 4 years of higher education (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006, p.255). Although not fully captured in the name 8-4-4 system, the system also has a pre-primary component where children attend 2 to 3 years of pre-primary school. Apart from core subjects (Maths, English and Kiswahili), the curriculum included various vocational subjects. The aim was to provide two pathways of exiting primary education: complete the primary cycle of education and enter the labour market, or proceed to high school and later on to higher university. Similarly, the secondary school curriculum included both academic and pre-vocational subjects (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006, p.258). The change in the system of education was a result of recommendations made by the Presidential Working Party on the Second University in Kenya. Although the terms of reference required the Working Party to "examine the feasibility of setting up a second university, they addressed themselves to the need to restructure the whole school system" (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006, p.255). The system of education was implemented despite concerns that it would not improve employability and that it would water down the quality of basic education because the designers of the system had infused training objectives into the

educational system (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006, p.261). Figure 3 is a visual illustration of the structure of the formal component of the 8-4-4 school system:

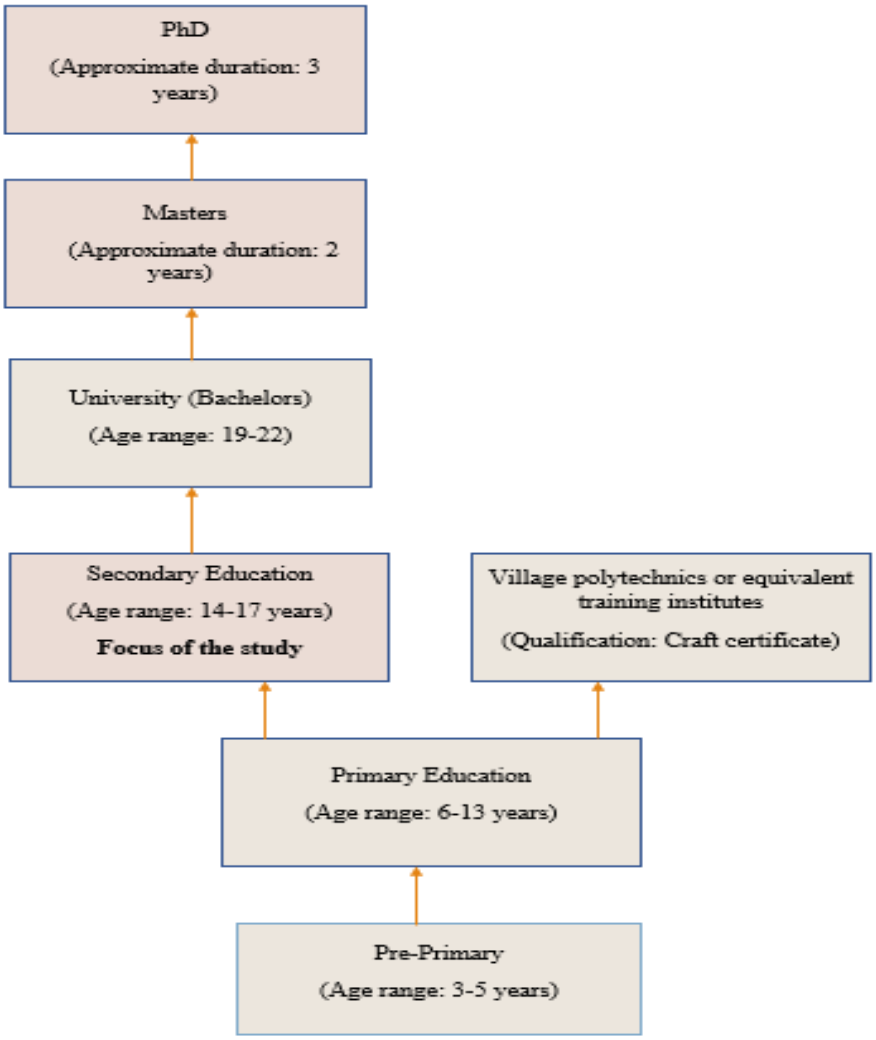


Figure 3: Structure of 8-4-4 system

This study focusses on the basic education segment of school system with specific reference to secondary schools.

2.2. Free Primary Education

In January 2003, the newly elected government introduced free primary education, prompting an unprecedented increase in enrolment. Enrolment in public primary schools increased from 5.9 million to 7.2 million (Tooley, Dixon, & Stanfield, 2008, p.450). While free primary education is assumed to be necessary to ensure access to education for the poor, it comes with its own challenges. In Kenya, for instance, increased enrolment posed a challenge to schools. Schools reported "acute shortages of teachers, physical facilities and learning materials" (Oketch & Somerset, 2010, p.vii).

High enrolment in 2003 meant that there would be high number of students joining high school in 2011. This signalled an increase in the number of children transiting to secondary school, with a number of attendant problems. The secondary schools had not expanded to accommodate the high number of primary school leavers joining high school. This most certainly led to congestion. However, not all schools were congested. Oketch & Somerset, (2010) have noted that although transition to secondary schools had improved over the years, students transiting to secondary schools were not doing so on an equal footing. Public secondary schools in Kenya are arranged in a "tripartite hierarchy" with a "tiny number of prestigious national schools at the top of the pyramid", extra-county and county schools in the middle and sub-county schools (mostly day schools) at the bottom of the pyramid (Oketch & Somerset, 2010, p.15).

Further, Oketch & Somerset (2010) note that the so-called national schools are "robust institutions, buttressed by well-established traditions and supported by influential old pupils" (Oketch & Somerset, 2010, p.15). The competition to join these schools is intense, with the odds being "1 in 100 winning a place in a national secondary" (Oketch & Somerset, 2010, p.15). It is worth noting that this hierarchical structure is a carry-over from the old colonial (British) structure of education that Kenya tried to Africanise at independence

(Olson, 1972, p.51). The names these elite national secondary schools bore before they were Africanised are quite telling: Duke of York, Prince of Wales School, and The Kenya European Girls' High School among others. For students who score a good mark at the end of the primary school cycle, which grants them access to a national secondary school, the prospects of joining university increase considerably.

Table 2 below provides a summary of performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) from 2010 to 2015.

Table 2: Summary of KCSE performance (2010-2014)

KCSE Grade	Male					Female				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
A	934	1,315	1,277	1,855	2,133	632	615	698	867	940
A-	4,425	6,322	5,947	6,276	7,644	2,140	2,741	3,288	3,492	4,124
B+	8,620	11,150	11,753	10,776	12,606	4,117	5,240	5,977	6,237	7,208
B	11,616	14,793	15,962	15,315	17,941	6,557	8,151	9,221	9,341	11,378
B-	15,103	18,344	18,936	18,216	21,997	9,624	11,771	12,174	12,648	16,318
C+	19,502	22,474	22,180	21,836	25,978	13,864	16,742	16,291	16,515	21,450
C+ and Above	60,200	74,398	76,055	74,274	88,299	36,934	45,260	47,649	49,100	61,418
C	24,329	27,631	27,134	26,492	30,699	19,440	22,334	21,771	22,079	27,989
C-	28,178	31,955	31,582	32,385	36,015	24,232	26,890	27,166	28,378	34,662
D+	30,497	34,093	35,655	37,703	38,749	26,265	29,760	31,548	34,100	37,449
D	29,532	32,995	37,694	39,672	37,365	27,329	31,397	35,872	38,505	36,136
D-	20,245	23,741	26,436	28,542	24,542	20,962	23,532	25,997	27,251	23,174
E	3,227	3,684	4,263	3,913	3,227	2,971	2,916	3,621	3,126	2,409
Total	196,208	228,497	238,819	242,981	258,896	158,133	182,089	193,624	202,539	223,237

Source: Kenya National Examinations Council

The best grade a student can attain at the end of the secondary school cycle is an overall 'A' grade which assures them of entry into university as well as admission to top-ranked courses such as medicine, engineering, law among others. For instance, in 2010, there were 934 male students attaining an overall 'A' grade and 632 female students. Table 3 below is a summary of the grading system:

Table 3: KCSE grading system

Grade	Points	Interpretation
A	12	Excellent performance
A-	11	
B+	10	
B	9	Good performance
B-	8	
C+	7	Average performance
C	6	
C-	5	
D+	4	Fair performance
D	3	
D-	2	
E	1	Poor performance

For a student to join a public university, where fees are much lower than in private universities, they must score a minimum grade of C+. In 2010, for instance, 60,200 male students and 36,934 female students qualified for admission to public universities. Table 2 (p.23) shows that the percentage of those that score a university entry grade is often less than half of the total number of candidates. It is worth noting that vacancies in public universities are also limited. Therefore, the cut-off mark for university entry can sometimes be adjusted upwards.

2.3. Competence-Based Curriculum

The 8-4-4 system of education has faced a lot of criticism over the years. As a result, the government has undertaken piecemeal curriculum reviews from time to time to improve the system and align it to global trends. In response to the criticism that the 8-4-4 system is a highly stressful and examination-oriented system that produces graduates who are not well-prepared for the world of work, the government is in the process of implementing a new

curriculum. The 8-4-4 system is being phased out to pave the way for a new system of education- the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) whose main mission is to nurture every learner's potential (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2017, p.10). The implementation is currently at the pre-primary and lower primary levels. Below (Figure 4) is the structure of the new curriculum:

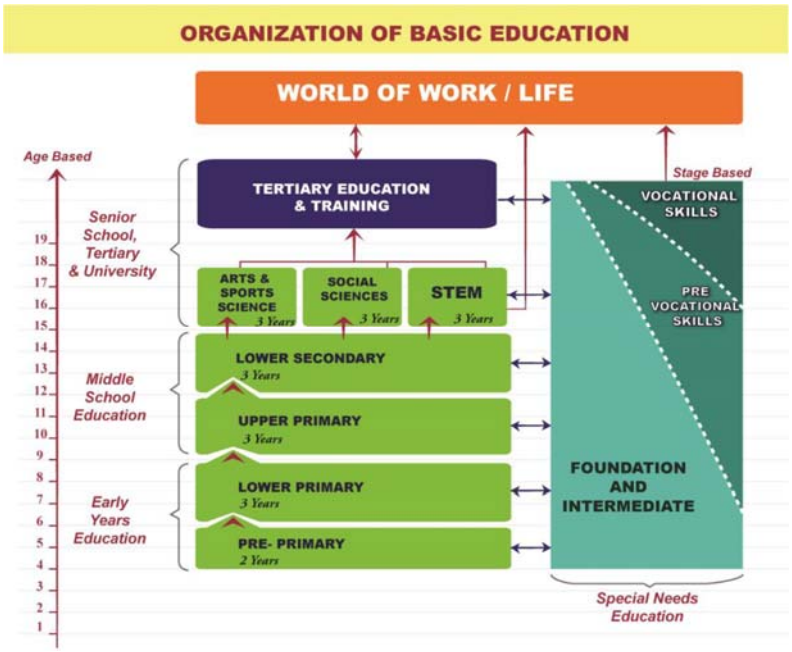


Figure 4: Structure of CBC education system

Source: (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2017)

In summary, the context within which I explore the recurrent problem of school arson is an environment in which there is a hierarchical three-tier classification of schools, with some well-endowed schools and some poorly equipped schools. It is also a highly competitive, high stakes testing environment riddled with teacher shortages, exam malpractice and limited opportunities for students who do not attain a good grade.

2.4. An Enduring Colonial Legacy

Education systems in Africa are "… characterised by old habits, structures and attitudes of colonialism" (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2017, p. 86). Kenya is no

exception to this assertion. Education systems were inherited from colonial governments, and the influence of colonialism may still be present in the way educational institutions are structured in postcolonial Africa. Healy-Clancy (2013) has noted that Western education was a joint venture between colonial administrations and missionaries, whose main agenda is summarised below:

> "... '[t]he best education of youth born heathen, …must be given through the instrumentality of missionary institutions in their respective countries', although 'under the paternal care' of American missionaries there" (p.20).

Similarly, Sifuna & Otiende (2006) have summarised the aims of the introduction of Western education in colonial Africa, thus:

> "Colonial administrations and the missionaries attached so much importance to education that it had to be organised to inculcate the values of western civilisation in the minds of those who were to loyally serve the occupying power. The advantages to be gained by Africans were not primary objectives of colonial education. A foreign culture was imposed through Christianity and education" (pp. 189-190).

In Kenya, for instance, the current structure of schools, including boarding schools, is a carry-over from the structure put in place by the British colonial government. In his memoir, wa Thiong'o (2012) explains his experience of schooling in a typical elite Kenyan boarding school:

> "In general, the Alliance classroom of our times abstracted knowledge from local reality. There were no attempts to mine local knowledge. In literature classrooms for instance, … English texts were the norm and Europe the cultural reference." (p.63)

Healy-Clancy (2013) makes a comment that captures the view that one of the aims of Western education was the 'acculturation' of young children.

> "Like educated elites throughout much of Africa in the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries, mission educated Africans in South Africa found the skills and expectations they had forged in the classroom clashed radically with the constraints facing them outside…" (p. 1)

As I explore the different understandings of school arson, I remain aware of the colonial legacy of Kenya's education system and of the possibility that current discourses may include references to a problematic colonial past whose legacy may still influence schools in the current postcolonial context.

2.5. School violence: individual pathology or a contextualised problem?

School violence is a global problem that attracts media attention, but it mostly attracts attention when it involves extreme forms of violence. Toby (1994) notes that the media highlights the extreme cases of school violence because "...they are frightening, …they arise suddenly with little or no warning, yet with great force" (p.4). The forms of school violence highlighted by the media vary. News media in different countries highlight the type of school violence that is most extreme depending on the context.

In America and Europe, school shootings receive the greatest news media attention (Parks, 2009, p.8). In America, the Columbine school shootings of 1999 received intense media coverage (Larkin, 2007, p.2; Muschert, 2007, p.67) and the incident was considered to be one of the worst cases of school violence. The shooting left 13 people dead and 23 wounded (Bockler, Seegar, Sitzer, & Heitmeyer, 2013, p.11). In Germany, it is the 2002 Erfurt school shooting, in which 16 students died, that received intense media coverage (Hoffman & Roshdi, 2013, p.363). In all the cases of school shootings mentioned above, the

assailants died by suicide after carrying out the shootings. In South Korea, the media mostly highlights bullying (Lee & Oh, 2012, p.550) mainly because of its association with suicide among adolescents who experience peer victimisation (Hong & Eamon, 2009, p.612; Koo, Kwak, & Smith, 2008, p.120). Lastly, in South Africa, the forms of school violence that are highlighted in the news media include violent robbery, murder and rape (Harber, 2001, p.262).

The focus on school shootings or bullying has had a bearing on the type of scholarly research carried out to make meaning of the school violence phenomenon and consequent attempts made to find solutions. The focus on school shootings and bullying, for instance, has led to more research on understanding what causes the individual shooter/bully to engage in such forms of violence. There is focus on individual characteristics of the perpetrators of school violence. School shooters have been described as loners who have few or no friends (Meloy, Hempel, Mohandie, Shive, & Gray, 2001; Newman, Fox, Harding, Mehta, & Roth, 2004) or those that do not have the skill of solving social problems (Verlinden, Hersen, & Thomas, 2000). Bullies, on the other hand, have been characterised as students who have low empathy (Farrington & Baldry, 2010) and low self-control (Moon, Hwang, & McCluskey, 2011), among others. However, Bantjes & Nieuwoudt (2011) have argued that blaming individual psychopathology for disruptive behaviours in schools, ignores the role played by the "…organisational, cultural and socio-political environment…" that precipitates these behaviours (p. 30).

Højholt & Kousholt (2020) have suggested that in researching schools, there is need "… to take into account both the subjective and situated dimensions and the societal and historical character of human life" (p. 1). Similarly, Flores (2005) has noted that:

> "Schools often represent the political, cultural, ethnic and economic fabric of the community and what goes on inside the doors of each building is often indirectly, if not directly, tied to the larger community" (p.83).

Therefore, in this study. I take cognisance of the fact that schools in Kenya are influenced by the local environment in which they are located, the national environment, the historical context, the current socio-political climate as well as the global environment. I investigate the phenomenon of school arson, taking into account these multiple contexts.

In addition, the phenomenon of school arson in Kenya is characterised by 'anonymity'. It is often not possible to pinpoint the actual arsonists because most school fires happen under the cover of darkness. This may be one of the reasons why the court cases involving school arson take long to successfully prosecute. Therefore, a study designed to focus on individual pathology or aimed at understanding individual arsonists might not be fruitful. It is partly for this reason that this study adopts the social representations approach to help take into account multiple voices and multiple contexts (cultural, historical, political, social, colonial and postcolonial).

2.6. Chapter summary

In Chapter Two, I have presented a brief overview of the Kenyan school system, both the 8-4-4 system and the new Competence Based Curriculum. I have also presented some of the challenges that face the school system to provide a context for some of the findings that I discuss in the results chapters. Secondly, I have highlighted the influence of colonialism on the school system in Kenya and why it is necessary to pay attention to vestiges of the colonial legacy revealed through the data I will be analysing in this study. Thirdly, I have clarified how the concept of school violence, with particular reference to school arson in Kenya, is conceptualised and researched in this dissertation. I have further explained why I have not

focussed on individual pathology but rather on the social, historical, political and sociocultural contexts within which school arson in Kenya happens.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL APPROACH, RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Theoretical Framework

Having adopted a constructionist (Burr, 1995, p.2) epistemology, I focussed on finding a theory that was versatile and flexible enough to allow for multiple interpretations of reality to be explored. I searched for a theory that would link my research questions and my methodology but still accommodate other theories if I needed them to interpret data. Social representations theory provided the framework that I needed. Rateau, Moliner, Guimelli, & Abric (2012) have noted that while social representations theory has been criticised for being imprecise and flexible, it is this flexibility that allows the theory to be adaptable (p. 488).

Social representations theory was first promulgated by Moscovici (1984, p.24). Social representations refer to the ways in which a group collectively elaborates a social object for 'purposes of behaving and communicating' and they "are about processes of collective meaning-making resulting in common cognitions which produce social bonds uniting societies, organizations and groups" (Höijer, 2011, p.3). Howarth (2006, p.69) argues that social representations "…give us a way of making sense of and so constituting socially significant phenomena". Social representations emerge when a new phenomenon subverts social rules (Moscovici & Duveen, 2000, p.22) because they help make "the unfamiliar familiar" (Wagner and Hayes, 2005, p.210; Moscovici & Duveen, p.37).

The key tenets from social representations theory that are relevant to this study are the twin socio-cognitive processes of anchoring and objectification. Anchoring involves comparing the unfamiliar phenomenon into some existing structure of knowledge or to "relate the content and structure of previous knowledge to the new phenomenon in order to make sense of it" (Sarrica and Contarello, 2004, p.550). For instance, if high school students engage in violent acts such as arson, a common explanation would include the effect of drug

abuse or lack of proper socialization due to bad parenting. Objectification refers to the process of transforming the unknown into a concrete object that can be perceived and experienced by our senses (Höijer, 2011, p.12). Objectification completes the process of anchoring. For instance, newspaper articles reporting on the phenomenon may represent such students using photographs of 'unkempt' young men standing outside a bar or near a burning metal box. The two processes inherently complement each other: a new object is understood through anchoring but becomes part of common sense through objectification (Wagner et al., 1999, p.99). Objectification serves the function of capturing the essence of the school arson phenomenon, making it intelligible and weaving it into the fabric of the public's common sense (Wagner et al., 1999, p.99).

In this study, I also applied the concept of "polyphasia" (Moscovici & Duveen, 2000, p.245). Sarrica and Contarello (2004, p.551) have noted that it is possible for different groups within the same cultural framework to take up distinct positions in the representational field. Similarly, different groups of people can have different representations of the same object (Rateau et al., 2012, p. 489). This view fits in well with the constructionist view that knowledge is situated and that different people can have different interpretations of the same 'reality'. Jovchelovitch (1996) also argues that social representations develop through the media, through conversations, through narratives among many other forms of social mediation, but the construction of social representations is not a neutral process. She further opines that "…some groups have a greater chance than others to assert their version of reality" (Jovchelovitch, 1996, p.127).

The flexibility of social representations theory allowed me to interpret multiple understandings of the recurrent problem of school arson carefully taking into account the multiple interpretations that my participants held and it was flexible enough to allow me to

draw on any relevant theory as demanded by the data. In this study, I drew upon other theories such as hegemonic masculinity, trauma theory, moral panics and framing because studying the phenomenon of school arson became more and more interdisciplinary as I engaged with the data. But social representations theory provided the latitude for me to do so.

Despite the latitude that social representations theory provided, I recognised that the theory has also come under a lot of criticism, especially for engaging in cognitive reductionism. The two socio-cognitive processes of anchoring and objectification are often viewed as cognitive processes that can be subsumed under cognitive psychology (Semin, 1985). However, Billig (1993) has countered this argument and stated that the view that social representations theory is overly cognitive in orientation is based on a misunderstanding resulting from critics equating anchoring and objectification to categorisation and schemata – two cognitive psychology processes. To avoid being trapped in the debate of cognitive psychology, I adopted the view held by Bauer & Gaskell (1999) of focussing more on the function of the social representations theory and less on the contents of representations. In this study, I focus more on what the social representations do, that is, the "… historical roots, the immediate social function and the future implications of particular representations" (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005).

3.1. Research Design

In this study, I chose to use a qualitative research design and a constructionist worldview (Creswell, 2014, p.37) aimed at exploring the different understandings of school arson that exist among outsiders (government reports, print media reports and social media discussions) and insiders (students, teachers and parents). A qualitative research design was ideal in this case because it allowed me to "collect participant meanings, focus on a single phenomenon and study the context of the participants" (Creswell, 2014, p.48). The study involved the use of both secondary data (published documents) and primary data (interviews

with key actors). In qualitative methodology, knowledge is situated and subjective. Qualitative research is concerned with how individuals experience phenomena or how experience is constructed in people's everyday lives (Silverman, 2017, p.133)**.** The researcher and the participants are co-creators of knowledge.

An exploratory inductive study made it possible to gain an in-depth understanding of my participants and through inductive coding of both primary and secondary data. The qualitative research design is advantageous because of its flexibility. It allowed me to use different methods to collect data that would help me gain a full understanding of the recurrent phenomenon of school arson. I used desktop searches, library searches, online real-time tracking of the Twitter stream and a simple search using Tweet Deck to obtain secondary data/secondary documents (Gibson & Brown, 2009, pp. 66-67) . I also used focus groups to obtain primary data. The procedures for sampling and collecting the data are described in detail in each of the research chapters (from Chapter Four to Chapter Nine).

3.1.1. Use of secondary documents for the study

Gibson & Brown (2009) have classified documents used in research into two: primary and secondary documents (pp. 66-67). They define secondary documents as those that "take the form of newspaper articles, academic work and other forms of reportage that are secondary with respect to the events and accounts with which they engage and on which they report" (p.67). In this study, I use the term "secondary documents" to refer to government reports, newspaper articles and word documents created using social media posts (tweets).

The main problem with using documents is access. However, for this study, all documents were publicly available upon payment of library fees and photocopy charges.

Social media data were sourced according to ESOMAR guidelines[2]. Secondly, although the search for documents is time consuming and the data generated is massive, the rich data the documents provided enriched this study.

3.1.2. Sampling for the interview component of the study

I used purposive sampling because it allowed me to focus on the characteristics of the population that were of interest and which were relevant to the research question/s (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p79) and that would help achieve the objectives of the study.

I used two types of purposive sampling to select the sample: typical case and extreme case sampling. Typical case sampling is used when the aim is to focus on the normality or typicality of the cases (Collins, 2010, p.358). Researchers also choose research participants because they are "typical of the phenomenon under examination" (Tracy, 2013, p.137). The term typicality, in this case, was applied to select a typical boys' secondary school in Kenya that had experienced incidents of arson. Findings from such a school can be compared to similar samples. However, in the 2016 school arson crisis, two incidents of school arson attracted more attention than the other cases. This is based on the discussions these cases generated on radio, on social media and in print media. One school was a national school (refer to the context in Chapter Two) and the other school (a county school) had seven dormitories burnt in one night. The two schools helped meet the criteria of extreme case sampling, that is, cases that demonstrate the phenomenon of interest in an extreme or in an unusual way (Collins, 2010, p.358).

A national school admits top students from across the country while a county school admits 'B' students from across the country but reserves about twenty percent of the

[2] ESOMAR (https://www.esomar.org/what-we-do/about-us) is a Netherlands-based organization which provides a platform and reporting standards for research in a number of fields, including research on social media.

vacancies for students from within the county. For comparison purposes and to increase the sample, two schools of equal status (national and county) that did not experience incidents of arson were also included in the sample. In total, the sample consisted of four boys' secondary schools. The sample was further stratified before the final selection of focus group participants. For each of the results chapters, I have presented how the sample was stratified depending on the focus of the journal article.

3.1.3. Recruitment of participants

Access to the schools was provided by the head teachers who appointed a link person (Senior teacher or Dean of Studies or Deputy head teachers) whom I liaised with to locate key informants from among the students, teachers and parents.

Since these were boarding schools, the process of recruiting the participants involved two stages. I interacted with the students and explained the nature of the study before selecting key informants. The key informants included student leaders, prefects, class leaders and ordinary members of the student body. The participants were given minor consent forms (assent forms in Appendix E2) and parent/legal guardian consent forms between September and October 2017. I discussed the content and requirements of the consent forms and asked the students to discuss both sets of forms with their parents during the holidays. The second stage, involved collecting the consent forms from the students when schools opened in January 2018. Two participants withdrew from the study because their parents were uncomfortable with a study involving school fires for fear of victimisation. I recruited two new participants, and I collected their consent forms after the half-term break in February 2018.

The teachers were recruited on school days during their free time (lunch break or after classes at 4 pm Monday to Friday). I interacted with the teachers and explained the nature of

the study before selecting key informants. The selected teachers signed consent forms before the focus groups were scheduled. I recruited the parents were on the days when the Board of Management meetings were scheduled in some schools or during visiting days in others or parent-teacher consultation days. The link persons would facilitate the meetings between the first author and the parents. I took care to schedule the focus group discussions on days that were convenient for them. I took into account that these were boarding schools and that parents would need to travel, sometimes this involved long-distance travel, to attend the focus group discussions. Whenever my schedule of the focus groups inconvenienced them, I would re-schedule the meetings.

3.1.4. Focus Groups

I used focus group discussions to collect primary data. Morgan & Hoffman (2018) recommend the use of focus groups when the goal of the study is to understand consensus and diversity (p. 251). Focus groups help examine "…not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way" (Kitzinger, 1995, p.299). The contributions made by each participant allow for the construction of a cohesive picture (Goebert, 2002, p.6) of the phenomenon under study. Secondly, the method relies on interaction and it is this interaction that allows the researcher to use participants' discussions to produce data that would otherwise be inaccessible without the interaction of participants (Morgan, 2019, pp.4-5). Lastly, focus groups are versatile. Morgan & Hoffman (2018) have noted that focus groups are a "… general purpose qualitative method that can be used with a variety of epistemological frameworks" (p.252). The other critical consideration when choosing focus group for this study was that focus group interviews allow the researcher to investigate how people in a group "…collectively make sense of a phenomenon" (Bryman, 2008, p.476) and they allow the researcher to focus on issues relevant to the study as well as use follow-up

questions (Barbour, 2008, p.133). Focus groups were well suited for achieving the aim of exploring the different understandings of school arson.

One main disadvantage of focus groups is that proceedings are difficult to summarise (Denscombe, 2010, p.193). It is worth noting, however, that the same weaknesses of semi-structured interviews allow researchers to collect such rich data that, according to Alshenqeeti, (2014,p.40), the risk is worth taking. The second disadvantage is the small sample size. Morgan & Krueger (1993) have noted that "focus group samples are usually both unrepresentative and dangerously small" (p. 14). This was, however, not a concern for this study it would be a concern if there not a need to make statistical generalisations. The aim of this study was to understand the different understandings of the recurrent problem of school arson and not to make any generalisations.

I conducted the focus group discussions once or twice, depending on the depth of the responses I received. Each focus group comprised eight participants. All the participants were interviewed in English. The participants were free to respond in either English or Kiswahili since I am conversant with Kiswahili. In Kenya, it is common for speakers to switch between English and Kiswahili in everyday conversations. I took this into account during the focus group discussions. An in-depth description of how I conducted the focus group discussions is given in each of the individual journal articles in Chapters 4 to 9.

3.1.5. Data Analyses

The government reports and newspaper articles were scanned and converted to editable pdf files while tweets were downloaded off screen captures and pasted onto blank word documents to create editable word documents that were uploaded onto ATLAS.ti v.8. This was done to facilitate the coding of the data in ATLAS.ti. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. There were three to four iterations of reading through the secondary

data. The readings helped me become thoroughly familiar with the data. I read the interview transcripts while listening to the tape recordings to confirm that they were a true reflection of the focus group discussions. The readings also helped me corroborate the information across data sets before I started the analysis. For instance, the information reported in print media differed with the information in one transcript. I followed up by asking two participants who were in that particular focus group to read through the transcript and confirm the information. I was able to confirm that the media reports had been wrong.

All the data were uploaded onto ATLAS.ti v. 8 for coding. The data were thematically analysed using Braun and Clarke's (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2019) six steps of inductive thematic analysis. Thematic analysis allowed me to explore meaningful patterns and classify them into themes. The other advantage that thematic analysis has is that it generates research findings that are readily understood by policy makers and the general public (Howitt, 2010, p.164). The six-steps and the coding procedures were adapted for each individual data set. More details on thematic analysis are explained in the results chapter/ individual journal articles from Chapter Four to Chapter Nine of the dissertation.

3.1.6. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for this study was provided by the Stellenbosch University Humanities Research Ethics Committee (Project number: REC-2017-0151-581; see Appendix B1) as well the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Kenya [Permit number: NACOSTI/P/17/43769/19225; see Appendices B2 (i) and B2 (ii)]. Further permission was sought from the respective County Directors and sub-county directors of education depending on the location of the schools included in the sample (see Appendices C1 to C3).

Permission was also sought from my participants. Parents and teachers signed consent forms (see Appendix E1). Students signed assent forms (see Appendix E2), and they were also provided with parental consent forms (see Appendix E3). The participants were provided with my contact information, my supervisor's contact information and the details of the contact person at the Division for Research Development of Stellenbosch University in case they needed to consult or clarify information. All the information was contained in their individual consent/assent/parental consent forms.

A counsellor was also recruited for the study in case the focus group discussions brought back bad memories or became upsetting to any of the participants (see appendices D1 and D2).

3.2. Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented my epistemological standpoint and presented my theoretical framework. I have also summarised the key elements of my research design and given reasons for the choice of my methods. Since this is a thesis by publication, I have avoided repeating most of the details on research methodology because I adapted the methods, especially in terms of sampling and data analysis, to suit each manuscript. I have also discussed ethical considerations. In the next section of the dissertation, I present the results chapters.

STRUCTURE OF THE RESULTS CHAPTERS

The results chapters are in two parts: In Part 2 , I present the chapters that present the outside view (etic understandings of school arson) (Tracy, 2013, p.21). The first chapter in Part 2 presents findings of a brief inductive thematic analysis of government reports as a way of providing a context for the chapters that follow. Government reports are generated by taskforces that are appointed by the government whenever the school fires crisis flares and causes public outrage. In this study, the views presented in government reports are classified under 'outside views' of school arson. Part 2 also presents two manuscripts; one dealing with the social representations of school arson on Kenyan print media while the second manuscript explores the social representations of school arson on Kenyan social media.

In part 3, I present the chapters that present the emic understandings of school arson (Tracy, 2013, p.21) or the inside view. This section presents the lived experiences of teachers, students and parents. I adopt the view that these are the 'actors' who experience the consequences of the recurrent problem of school arson directly. The section comprises three manuscripts presented as individual chapters. In these chapters. I explore the social representations of school arson among a selected number of secondary school teachers, students from four boys' secondary schools (two schools experienced arson and two schools did not) and parents affiliated to the four schools.

INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

In this section, I present the social representations of school arson through an analysis of the views presented in government reports, Kenyan print media and on Kenyan social media. The section contains:

i. Chapter Four: A chapter presenting a summary of government reports. This chapter provides useful background information for understanding the chapters which follow in this and the following parts of the thesis

ii. Chapter Five (Manuscript 1): ***Representing school arson in Kenya: An analysis of newspaper reporting***

iii. Chapter Six (Manuscript 2): ***The "School burning Olympics": Social representations of school arson in Kenyan social media***

CHAPTER FOUR: A BRIEF SUMMARY OF GOVERNMENT REPORTS ON SCHOOL ARSON IN KENYA

4.0 Introduction

In Kenya, the use of commissions of inquiry to generate government reports that inform government policy dates back to the colonial era. The earliest commissions of inquiry included the 1909 Fraser commission appointed to recommend a structure of education in the East African Protectorate (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006, p.193) and the 1924 Phelps-Stokes commission that recommended practically oriented education for African communities (Eshiwani, 1993, p.24). The tradition of education commissions of inquiry continued after independence, with the appointment of the 1963 Ominde Commission to conduct a survey of the existing educational resources and to advise the government in the formulation and implementation of national policies for education (Eshiwani, 1993, p.26; Sifuna & Otiende, 2006, p.240) and the 1981 Mackay Commission that recommended a change in the education system among others (Eshiwani, 1993, pp.28-9). The commissions of inquiry are often named after the chairpersons who headed the commissions.

The government reports on school unrest in secondary schools in Kenya referred to in this thesis are situated within this context. Whenever school violence in Kenya flares, especially when it draws public outrage, the government responds by appointing a commission of inquiry to investigate the problem. Table 4 below presents a summary of the four taskforces/commissions of inquiry that have generated reports on school unrest and their terms of reference:

Table 4: Summary of government taskforces on school unrest

Report	Year	Terms of reference
The Report of the Presidential Committee on Student Unrest and Indiscipline in Kenyan Schools (Ministry of Education, 1991)	1991	To investigate, make recommendations and report on: causes of unrest and indiscipline in educational institutions with special reference to secondary schools in relation to: - i. Academic performance and participation in co-curricular activities of girls in mixed secondary schools vis-a-vis that of boys. ii. Adequacy of guidance and counselling in mixed secondary schools. iii. Physical facilities in mixed secondary schools. iv. Discipline of students in schools, especially in mixed secondary schools. v. Any other recommendations related to the subject vi. Management of secondary schools.
The Report of the Task Force on Student Discipline and Unrest in Secondary Schools (Ministry of Education, 2001)	2001	To brainstorm with various stakeholders in education and make recommendations on issues related to the following: i. Discipline in secondary schools. ii. Strategies for the achievement of UPE, EFA by the years 2005 and 2015 respectively. iii. Ways of increasing transition rate from primary to secondary. To determine and make recommendations on any other issue which the Task Force finds relevant.
The Report of the Departmental Committee on Education, Research and Technology on the Inquiry into Students' Unrests and Strikes in Secondary Schools (Republic of Kenya, 2008)	2008	i. To visit schools affected by the wave of unrest in each province; ii. Hold public hearings in each province to collect evidence from stakeholders in education on the possible root causes of the unrests and strikes and proposals on the way forward; and iii. Make recommendations that will deter future recurrence of unrest and strikes in secondary schools.
The Report of the Special Investigations Team on Schools Unrest (Republic of Kenya, 2016)	2016	Members of the team were appointed on 19th July 2016, and their terms of reference were to: i. Ensure comprehensive investigation of ail c m of fires during second term 2016. ii. Review recommendations of past task forces on student unrest, review implementation status and propose methodology of effecting the balance of proposals, iii. Audit existing school safety and security regulations and systems and make recommendations on stricter measures to ensure high standards of discipline in schools. iv. Investigate the possible link between school unrest and devil worship, radicalisation, lesbianism/ homosexuality, drug and substance abuse, cultism and mushrooming of religious groupings.

The terms of reference indicate that the appointment of these commissions was aimed at finding solutions to the recurrent problem of school unrest, which in many instances is accompanied by arson. However, the use of commissions of inquiry has also generated much discourse on their effectiveness in solving the problem of school unrest, especially the recurrent problem of arson.

The recurrent problem of school unrest, often accompanied by the burning down of school dormitories and disruption of learning activities is surprisingly predictable. It often occurs, as I have noted earlier, in the second term of the school calendar , and known as "the second term curse" (Ngwiri, 2018). The term suggests that there is an element of fatigue and resignation towards the inevitable nature of the school fires. It is the same kind of fatigue expressed in the discourse surrounding government reports. Print media discourse (sometimes capturing public views through letters to the editor) suggests that there is something deficient in the use of commissions of inquiry to solve the problem (Wanzala, 2017) . The reports generated by the commissions have assumed a life of their own, and there is often reference to government failure in using the recommendations in the reports to solve the problem of school fires. Every time the school fires flare, it is not uncommon to find newspaper reports suggesting that government reports with recommendations that would help solve the problem are "gathering dust" (Wanzala, 2017) and their recommendations, especially those concerning management of schools, have not been implemented because head teachers have not read the reports (Mureithi, 2016).

Because of the constant reference to failure to implement these government reports as one of the main reasons why school fires recur year after year, I sought to conduct a brief thematic analysis of the views on school arson presented in the four government reports using the six-step inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012)

4.1. Method

4.1.1. The Sample

All the government reports on school unrest generated by the four commissions of inquiry were included in the sample. The reports were too few and omitting any of them would not yield a comprehensive picture of the understandings of school arson presented in government reports. The 2001 report was purchased from the publisher (Jomo Kenyatta Foundation), the 1991 and 2008 reports were sourced from the Ministry of Education library, and the 2016 unpublished report was sourced from the Nation Media Group library.

The four government reports were scanned and converted into editable pdf documents using Adobe Acrobat OCR (optical character recognition) tool. The files were then uploaded onto ATLAS.ti version 8 for coding.

4.1.2. Data Analysis

There were three iterations of reading while becoming familiar with the data. The purpose of the first reading was to clean the data and to check that each page was accurately converted into editable text. The reports were then read a further two times in order for me to become thoroughly familiar with the contents of the reports, and for 1991 report, to select the section that was relevant to my research question. The terms of reference for the 1991 report extended beyond school unrest.

In ATLAS.ti, the reports (further referred to as the data) underwent two cycles of coding. The first cycle of coding generated initial codes using phrases and words drawn from the data and the researchers' interpretation of the data. The second cycle of coding involved checking for repeated codes and merging or deleting them (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.63) or splitting the codes with high frequencies (Friese, Soratto, & Pires, 2018, p.15).

The final list of codes was used to create groups that were later merged into sub-themes based on similarities and common words (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.63; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017, p.8). For instance, groups such as 'peer pressure', 'drug and substance abuse' and 'burnout' were grouped under the sub-theme 'student factors'. The code outputs for the key sub-themes were re-examined to generate patterns that would meaningfully help me interpret the data.

A further review of the sub-themes helped identify "… tentative and temporary" candidate themes (Terry, 2015, p.110) such as 'general boarding experience', 'external influence', and 'parental factors' among others. The review of themes involved combining smaller repetitive themes and renaming others to ensure that they represented the data (Clarke & Braun, 2015, p.94). Finally, the candidate themes were reviewed, and the two overarching themes that helped to meaningfully and coherently represent the understandings of school arson as presented in the government reports were constructed. In government reports, school arson is presented as a phenomenon constituting '*possible causes*' and which can be solved by implementing a number of '*suggested solutions/recommendations*.

4.1.3. Results

The table below is a summary of the most commonly expressed possible causes for school arson, as noted in government reports:

Table 5: Summary of possible causes of school arson

Possible causes		Report			
		1991	**2001**	**2008**	**2016**
1.	General boarding school experience				
	• Student factors (peer pressure, drug and substance abuse, hopelessness, burnout, fear of exams, devil worship and homosexuality)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	• School factors (dislike for school, poor living conditions, high handedness of prefects and headteachers, misappropriation of school funds, overcrowded dormitories, bad food, lack of entertainment, lack of communication between students and school administrators)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	• Teacher factors (absentee teachers, harsh punishment, inadequate coverage of syllabus, sexual harassment of students, heavy workload, underpaid and unmotivated)	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	Government factors (ban on corporal punishment, inadequate staffing and funding of schools, unclear promotion criteria for teachers and headteachers, bureaucracy, lack of support for guidance and counselling programmes and failure to implement recommendations made by past commissions of inquiry)	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.	Parental factors (poor parenting; effect of modernisation on parenting)	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.	External influence (morally decayed society with no role models)	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.	Technology (access to media and more recently internet and smartphones thus allowing for the influence of Western culture and consequent breakdown of African values)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Below is a summary of the most commonly expressed suggested solutions/recommendations:

Table 6: Summary of suggested solutions to school arson

	Suggested solutions/Recommendations	Report			
		1991	2001	2008	2016
1.	Parenting training programmes	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	Strengthen guidance and counselling programmes in schools	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.	Improvement of living conditions in boarding schools	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.	Curriculum reform to accommodate all learners, to include African culture and life skills and a review of the teacher training curriculum	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.	Dialogue and consultation among all stakeholders to find solutions to problems affecting schools, and better communication between students and school managers	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.	More vetting for students seeking school transfers and recommendation that provides for possible exclusion of 'bad apples' from school	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.	Post chaplains (spiritual leaders) to public schools to impart moral values in students	✓	✓	✓	✓

Besides the recommendations summarised above, the 2016 government report contains one highly grounded sub-theme (recommendation) that does not occur in the other reports: professionalise security in schools. The task-force recommends the posting of professional security personnel to public schools, more fencing preferably with perimeter walls, installation of security camera's CCTV and smoke detectors. They further suggest that there should be censorship of social media content.

4.1.4. Discussion

What is important to note is that the detail within two overarching themes (possible causes and suggested solutions/recommendations) is largely repeated across the four government reports despite the reports spanning a period of twenty-five years. There could be two probable explanations for this state of affairs. It is probable that the problems that cause

students to resort to violence have remained the same over the years, and there has been no real success at finding lasting solutions. Secondly, it is possible that the appointment of commissions of inquiry into school unrest in Kenya (like other commissions of inquiry elsewhere) is influenced by "short-term blame avoidance considerations, media salience and government popularity" (Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2010, p. 613). This view may also explain the common argument (especially in print media reports) that school fires in Kenya persist because of the government's failure to implement the recommendations of past reports. If the appointment of the commissions of inquiry was driven more by the avoidance of blame or to appease public anger, for instance, there may be no commitment to implement the recommendations contained in the reports generated.

Triangulation of the multiple data sets (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014, p.545; Patton, 1999, 1195) analysed for this study revealed another underlying problem with the government reports on school unrest. The discourse in the print media suggested that the government was to blame for the recurrent problem of school fires for failing to implement the recommendations made in past reports. Similarly, teachers were blamed for failing to implement some of the recommendations contained in past reports that directly required teachers to act. While it is logical to expect teachers to be at the fore-front of implementing the recommendations, discussions with teachers revealed a different view of government reports as illustrated in the quotations below. The teachers revealed that most of them had not seen the contents of the government reports:

> RESPONDENT: Those reports are not made available to schools. (…)
>
> INTERVIEWER: You've never seen them? (…)
>
> RESPONDENT: No. We have read about them in papers and heard about them on TV news. (**Margie**, a teacher in a school that experienced arson)

INTERVIEWER: The rest of you have no idea what is in there?

RESPONDENT: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You don't know what's in those reports?

RESPONDENT: We don't.

RESPONDENT: I doubt if they go to every school. (**Charles**, a teacher in a school that did not experience arson)

The teachers in the focus group discussions further noted that the government may be appointing commissions of inquiry that generate very good reports but it has a problem of not communicating the contents of the reports effectively:

INTERVIEWER: So, let me confirm, most of you have never seen the government reports on school unrest?

RESPONDENT: We haven't. I think the main reason is that teachers are not aware that the reports are out. (…). The government has very good reports but poor communication (Oscar, a teacher in a school that did not experience arson)

The teachers also noted that teachers are not part of the composition of the taskforces. They further opined that the lack of teacher representation might be one of the reasons why the recommendations made in the reports may fail even if they are implemented:

RESPONDENT: In fact, what I would say about those task forces, even the composition, is made up of people who currently are not involved in schooling. And so, some of the solutions they also bring are completely non-practical.

INTERVIEWER: They don't work?

RESPONDENT: They are very theoretical, so they don't work**. (Pam,** a teacher in a school that did not experience arson)

INTERVIEWER: What you are saying is that they should make the reports available to the teachers?

RESPONDENT: Yes, they should because teachers are the ones on the ground and teachers should be involved in those task forces. You see like now you have more information about what is in the reports than we do because the information, I think, is discussed in a boardroom somewhere. (**Tom**, a teacher in a school that experienced arson)

4.2. Conclusion

The appointment of commissions of inquiry culminates in the publication of a government report (Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2010, p.60) but the report on its own is no panacea for the crisis that first led to the appointment of the commission of inquiry. As the results indicate, the effectiveness of the government report is, to an extent, dependent on implementation. However, implementation is also dependent on how practical the recommendations made are. From discussions with teachers, it is clear that the composition of the membership of the commissions may hold the key to successful implementation of the recommendations. Appointing commissions of inquiry in which teachers (who are conversant with what is happening in schools) are not represented, the government limits the practical utility of the recommendations made.

Some of the recommendations may be impractical or counterproductive. For instance, the recommendation on increased surveillance and professionalising school security contained in the latest government report deserves special mention. The terms of reference for the 2016 commission of inquiry mandated the taskforce members to review recommendations of past task forces on student unrest, synthesise the findings and propose an implementation strategy review implementation status and propose methodology of effecting the balance of proposals'(Republic of Kenya, 2016). This report is the most current and the one most likely

to influence implementation and dictate policy in future because it is a synthesis of past reports, and it contains the latest views on school unrest. However, the suggestion on increased surveillance, introduction of professional security personnel in public schools and censor of social media content is worrisome.

Hirschfield (2008) has referred to the adoption of such policies to manage student deviance as the "criminalisation of school discipline" (p.80) that started in the 1980s in the United States and which has influenced school discipline internationally. The criminalisation involves schools incorporating "criminal justice personnel expertise, technology, and actual legal processes into their disciplinary and security approaches" among other measures (Hirschfield, 2018, p. 44). However, Hyman & Perone (1998) have argued that the adoption of these strategies can be counterproductive and noted that overdependence on external intervention to solve students' behaviour problems undermines school managers' authority and increases behaviour problems (p.12).

While school violence, such as the recurrent problem of school arson in Kenyan schools, is disruptive to the learning/teaching process, the solutions need to be grounded in psychological theory and research and not in punitiveness. With reference to the Australian and New Zealand contexts, Taylor & Kearney (2018) have pointed out that systems of school discipline should be underpinned by the recognition that external regulation and control will not bring about the development of the skills that children need to succeed in their future life (p.100). In keeping with this observation, there is a strong case for the involvement of teachers and other educationists in government commissions of inquiry and in helping find preventive solutions to school violence (Hyman & Perone, 1998, p.7).

Schools are relatively safe havens for children (DiGiulio, 2001, p71; Hyman & Perone, 1998, p.11; Taylor, Deakin, & Kupchik, 2018. p.5).despite the high-profile violent events

reported in the media. Perhaps the perception that the situation in schools is dire enough to warrant punitive behaviour management strategies is a result of exaggerated media reports that do not critically appraise the complexity of the school violence phenomenon (Hyman & Perone, 1998, p.12). This aspect of media reporting of school violence in the Kenyan context is explored further in the next chapter.

4.3. Chapter summary

In this chapter I have briefly interrogated the understandings of school arson in the four government reports and given an overview of the main themes. As indicated earlier, the views presented in government are considered 'outsider views' because they do not fully capture the lived experiences of the 'insiders. In the next chapter, I explore the social representations of school arson in Kenyan print media.

CHAPTER FIVE: MANUSCRIPT 1

Representing school arson in Kenya: An analysis of newspaper reporting

5.0 Introducing Manuscript 1

In this paper, I used inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012) to explore the social representations of the recurrent problem of school arson in Kenyan print media. Media framing of a phenomenon can influence how individuals construct their own understanding of the phenomenon. Media as a key purveyor of public discourse (Raynor, Matthews, & Mayere 2017. p. 1519) can influence public discourse on school arson through framing (Goffman, 1974. p.11). An analysis of newspaper articles from the two main media houses in Kenya showed that the discourse on school arson in Kenyan print media did not focus on school arson per se. The school arson crisis afforded journalists an opportunity to comment on the postcolonial globalised Kenyan society. The paper answers research question 1A. This manuscript has been fully accepted for publication in the *Global Media and Communication* journal.

5.1. Manuscript 1

Representing school arson in Kenya: An analysis of newspaper reporting

Abstract

Arson is a recurrent problem in Kenyan secondary schools. Though school violence (and notably gun violence) has received significant attention especially in the USA, there has been less academic attention to school arson, especially in Africa. This study explores how newspaper reports in Kenya framed school arson and links these framings to broader questions about the understanding and production of Kenyan identity. A thematic analysis of 334 newspaper reports revealed multiple understandings of school arson. Reports focused on the views of administrative government officials, ministry of education officials, teachers' union officials, headteachers and on information contained in government reports. There was little input from learners, parents and ordinary teachers. Print media discourse on school arson did not focus on the arson per se, but afforded journalists an opportunity to make a commentary on the postcolonial globalised Kenyan society. We discuss the implications of this for understanding postcolonial media in Africa.

Keywords

arson, school violence, Kenya, print media, social representations, thematic analysis

There have been many studies analysing media coverage, and specifically newspaper reporting, of school violence, especially in the USA (Leavy and Maloney, 2009). Muschert and Carr (2006), in an analysis of American shootings, focused on frame analysis (Goffman, 1974: 11; Pan and Kosicki, 1993: 70) and found that the school shootings were framed differently at different stages of reporting. They found that the shootings were initially framed at the individual and community level, then framed based on implications on the society, and finally, the frame changed back to the community level (Muschert and Carr, 2006: 760). Wondemaghen (2014: 696), by contrast, demonstrated that school shooting, as reported in the media '…was framed as a gun problem rather than a socially or psychologically related crime'. Some authors have focussed on emotive aspects of reporting on school shootings. For example, Burns and Crawford (1999: 147) focused on the media's role in sparking a moral panic

surrounding school shootings, and Kupchik and Bracy (2009: 136) focused on how news reports fuelled fear and heightened the sense of threat of school violence.

Though there are many studies on newspaper reporting of school violence, these focus primarily on school shootings in North America. School arson in Kenya, however, is in fact significantly more common than school shootings in the USA. There are no studies on this phenomenon, hence the need for the current study.

A brief history of schools and school violence in Kenya

Kenya's education system is influenced by British colonisation (Teferra and Altbach, 2004: 23). At independence, the country inherited a system of education established to educate British administrators (Sifuna and Otiende, 2006: 212; Yakaboski and Nolan, 2011: 2) consisting of schools modelled on the British public school tradition (Oxlade, 1973: 6). The defining characteristics of the British public school were '…selectivity, independence and boarding' (Oxlade, 1973: 6). In a British public school, '…most students, especially those coming from distant towns and rural areas, were boarders' (Van Zanten, 2010: 330). The boarding school characteristic is '…an essentially English feature of education' (Oxlade, 1973: 13). However, it is a common feature of Kenyan secondary schools, and it is mostly these boarding schools that experience riots, strikes and school fires (Griffin, 1996: 1).

The first recorded case of student unrest in Kenya was reported in 1908 during the colonial period when students refused to participate in manual work (a protest against technical education), and instead asked for more reading and writing (Sifuna and Otiende, 2006: 195). There have been many incidents of student unrest coupled with violence since then, all since Kenya gained independence in 1963. In 1974, for instance, 70 secondary schools experienced

student unrest. This upsurge led to a presidential decree banning strikes by workers and students (Kinyanjui, 1976: 1). However, there was a history behind these strikes. Between 1968 and 1974, the government had introduced a system of financing local community schools (*harambee* schools were originally funded by local community contributions and student fees) and admitting government sponsored students but still retaining vacancies (*harambee* streams) for the local communities (Kinyanjui, 1976: 3). This system brought about tension between government-aided and non-government-aided students. The tension was one of the main causes of the unrest. In addition, the government-aided students felt the *harambee* schools were not as well equipped as the well-established elite schools, the boarding facilities were poor and they lacked adequate teaching staff (Kinyanjui, 1976: 4).

By the last decade of the 20th century, school unrest was characterised by excessive destruction of property and loss of life. In 1999, for instance, students set a prefects' cubicle on fire, leading to the death of the four prefects. It was reported that the prefects were unpopular and that the alleged perpetrators were acting in revenge (Achieng, 2001). In 2001, there was a dormitory fire where more than sixty students perished. Two students aged 16, were the alleged perpetrators. Police investigations revealed the students were protesting against bad food and accommodation, misappropriation of school funds and cancellation of the school's examination results due to cheating (BBC News, 2002).

Contextualising school fires and reporting about them in Kenya

A landmark event in Kenyan history regarding child rights was the passing of the Children's Act in 2001. This act is framed in terms very similar to the language of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations [UN], 1989) with its emphasis on child rights, including the protection of children from all forms of violence. Article 28 of the UN Convention

specifically states that schools must be run in an orderly way without the use of violence. This, in effect, means that the use of corporal punishment is outlawed. As we shall show, the passing of this Act, predating as it did an upsurge in school arson in the country, was something of a watershed in Kenyan history, whereby established ideas about the subservient role of children and the need for physical punishments was replaced by this more cosmopolitan liberal view. This tension between a socially constructed 'international', liberal view of children and childhood and what can be seen as a more hierarchical African view to some extent parallels issues facing journalists in Kenya, and in Africa more broadly.

Between January and August, 2016, news headlines such as: 'Why are Kenyan Schools being torched?' and 'Wave of Kenya school fires continues' (BBC News, 25th July and 30th July, 2016 respectively), 'Over 100 Kenyan schools Burned in Apparent Arson Attacks' (VOA News, 30th July, 2016) and 'How Students planned and executed burning of dormitories' (Daily Nation Newspaper, 3rd July, 2016), became common.

The severity, frequency and intensity of the school fires, now much more common and devastating than in the past, drew outrage and condemnation across Kenya. Consequently, there exists an ongoing debate globally on what caused such deliberate destruction of property. At the time of writing this article, top stories in the country comprised headlines such as, 'Wave of unrest continues to rock Nyanza schools' (Daily Nation Newspaper, 8th July, 2018) and 'Two more Nyanza schools hit by dorm fires' (The Standard, 8th July, 2018).

Across Kenya, reports of the fires were disseminated in local newspapers. The reports contained perspectives of various stakeholders, including government officials, parents and

teachers' unions among others. Further, local newspapers also printed public reactions to the reports which are included in the data analysed.

What predominated in the newspaper reports was the following: while all newspaper reports were referring to one phenomenon (the burning of secondary schools), diverse opinions were expressed in the reports and conclusions arrived at. Although it was a problem that had recurred over the past two decades and had even been a subject of three main government taskforce investigations, there was no consensus on the causes nor the best way of managing the problem. It was clear that different people understood the school fires crisis differently. This article focuses on the different understandings of school arson by applying social representations theory (Moscovici, 1984: 24).

Our analysis uses thematic analysis of newspaper articles from the two largest media houses in Kenya (Daily Nation and The Standard Digital) to identify the different social representations of school arson in Kenyan print media. The analysis will help in gaining an understanding of the different social representations (Moscovici and Duveen, 2000) of school arson and pinpoint the dominant understandings.

Media Language and Framing

Framing involves selecting aspects of a perceived reality and highlighting them to promote particular interpretations (Entman, 1993: 52; Entman, 2007: 167). Media framing, therefore, influences what the readers notice and remember. This influence has also been referred to as media effects (Potter, 2012: 38). Wondemaghen (2014: 697) states that through framing, especially by including and excluding interpretations, the mass media have the power to direct audiences to those issues which are of concern and those which are not.

Newspapers can influence how the public debates an issue, thus influencing the social representations of a phenomenon. Bullock and Cubert (2002: 479) have noted that the choice of words in a newspaper article influences the public's understanding of an event. However, the understanding of an event may not be uniform due to the different interpretive schemas of the readers (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2009: 18)

Methodology

The sample

We searched the archives of the two media houses (Standard Digital, and Nation Media Group) which dominate the print media market in Kenya in terms of circulation (Ogola, 2018: 80).[1] The articles were sourced both from the media house libraries and the more recent articles from their websites (www.standardmedia.co.ke and www.nation.co.ke respectively). The key search terms used were 'school fires', 'school fire crisis', 'school unrest' and 'burning of schools'. Some of the articles were archived on old Polaroid films and were available as scanned copies.

The search yielded 334 newspaper articles (135 articles from the Standard Digital and 199 from the Nation Media Group) published between 2000 and 2018 on school violence/unrest in general, with emphasis on those that reported on arson incidents. The original number of articles was 413. However, some of the reports were about fires caused by electrical faults or were of unknown causes. The focus of this study is on fires that were a result of arson, and we, therefore, excluded 79 articles which alluded to fires caused by electrical faults or were of

[1] The third media house, *The Star*, with an estimated circulation of 10,000, copies was not included in the study because it started its operations in 2007. The focus of this study was to include newspaper articles from 2000 to date.

unknown causes. The articles included main headline stories, feature stories, commentaries and letters to the editor. The period of data collection was between June 2017 and April 2018. Below is a summary of the distribution of articles by year:

Table 1: The tally of newspaper articles

YEAR	Media House		TOTAL
	Standard Digital	Nation Media Group	
2000	0	1	**1**
2001	0	19	**19**
2002	0	2	**2**
2003	0	4	**4**
2004	1	14	**15**
2005	0	3	**3**
2006	0	1	**1**
2007	0	2	**2**
2008	0	8	**8**
2009	0	3	**3**
2010	6	5	**11**
2011	1	0	**1**
2012	7	11	**18**
2013	2	3	**5**
2014	0	0	**0**

2015	2	9	**11**
2016	87	86	**173**
2017	26	26	**52**
2018	3	2	**5**
TOTAL	**135**	**199**	**334**

The newspaper articles were uploaded onto ATLAS.ti version 8 for coding. The documents were grouped according to year and media house.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the six stages of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2012: 60–69). Thematic analysis is a method of systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set (Boyatzis, 1998: 4; Braun and Clarke, 2012: 57). Thematic analysis allows for the interrogation of the data in many ways. It allows for obvious meanings to be reported, latent meanings to be interrogated and the assumptions and ideas that lie behind the data to be explicitly stated (Braun and Clarke, 2012: 58). Thematic analysis could also be modified to suit the needs of the study (Nowell et al., 2017: 2) and it was accessible (Braun and Clarke, 2012: 58).

Results

We identified four central themes in the newspaper reporting on the fires:

a) *School arson as a form of protest*

b) *Bad apples spoiling the barrel*

c) *A broken-down society*

d) Consultation vs retribution

We present each of these in turn.

School arson as a form of protest

The most prominent theme mentioned in the newspaper articles was that of arson as a form of protest against various factors both inside and outside the schools. Reports spoke of generally poor conditions within the school environment, for example:

> We need to understand why children are only concentrating in burning dormitories and not administration blocks, laboratories and classrooms. There is an issue with boarding. (*Daily Nation*, July 28th, 2016 citing the chairman of the head teachers' association)

> There are underlying causes such as poor diet and horrible conditions in dorms. (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, July 27th, 2016)

Linked to this was a perception that educators were ineffective in terms of managing the school and effecting appropriate discipline, for example:

> In some schools, high handedness by teachers and punishment that is sometimes not commensurate with the offence are fertile grounds for resentment against school authorities. (Columnist; *The Standard*, July 22nd, 2016)

> They were protesting against alleged mismanagement of the school. (Staff writer; *Daily Nation*, October 24th, 2001)

Pressure placed on students both by changes in school policies and practices and by the teachers' inability to adapt optimally to these changes was seen as another reason for protests:

> Headteachers have joined the Kenya national union of teachers in claiming that recent changes to the school calendar and the elimination of prayer and visiting day during the third term as causes of school fires. (*The Standard*, July 28th, 2016)

> Noting that pressure to get grades maybe among factors causing students to raze down buildings in their institutions, the president advised parents and teachers not to exert excess emphasis on academic excellence. (*The Standard*, July 30th, 2016)

> Teachers were also blamed for not covering the syllabus on time. The last-minute rush to cover topics before examinations put too much pressure on students, resulting in unrest. (*Daily Nation*, February 10th, 2009; reporter citing a ministry of education report)

These are key examples of a range of ways in which arson is viewed as a form of protest against unsatisfactory, and, crucially, changing social conditions, an issue we shall return to in the discussion section below.

Bad apples spoiling the barrel

In contrast to the previous theme, which viewed arson as a response to school conditions, this theme located the reason for arson more clearly within what were perceived to be bad students who commonly influenced others. Here the attributions are much more individualised, and seen as the product of irrationality or questionable morality, leading to influence over the innocent:

> Key suspect in school fire was indisciplined. (Columnist; *The Standard*, September 6th, 2017)

> We do not use massive resource to build schools only for some students to raze them down because of madness. (Citing the words of the prime minister at the time: *Daily Nation*, October 20th, 2010)

> The team looked at the possibility of drug and substance abuse and incitement and peer pressure. (Columnist citing a report of a meeting between the teachers' service commission and secondary school head teachers – *Daily Nation*, July 29th, 2016)

> At least 10 of the suspects were admitted recently after being expelled from their previous schools for indiscipline. (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, August 6th, 2012)

Male gender was also seen as a factor:

> …in most cases, school unrest in Kenya occurs in either all-boys' schools or among male students in mixed institutions. Research across the globe has found that adolescent boys tend to report higher cases of externalised problem behaviour than girls. It is therefore not surprising that we have a major behaviour challenge among our male students. (Columnist; *The Standard*, July 21st, 2016)

The type of school was also seen as a factor. The few student perpetrators seemed to be confined to specific schools.

> Most affected are the former district schools, now called subcounty, which in percentage terms constituted 37.8 per cent of the reported cases, followed by the former provincial schools, now called extra-county at 31.1 per cent.

> Only two national schools have reported strikes – Meru School and Chewoyet in West Pokot County. Notably, these are the recently upgraded national schools. None of the old 17 national schools have experienced riots, a testament to the fact that they are generally well endowed with resources and are reasonably managed effectively. (Article citing findings contained in a government report in the *Sunday Nation*, July 24th, 2016)

This points to the existence of a stratified school system that seems to marginalise some learners. There is minimal likelihood of finding 'bad apples' in privileged schools because learners in these schools:

> …are driven by the desire to succeed academically. Little wonder that we rarely, if ever, hear of riotous destruction of property at Alliance or Starehe (*referring to two of the top privileged schools*) (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, July 5th, 2016)

However, 'bad apples' who are unwilling to learn and more likely to start school fires at the slightest provocation, are more likely to be found in the marginalised schools:

> The students on the other end of the spectrum view education as an unnecessary burden foisted on them by their parents and teachers. Therefore, it does not take much to get them worked up. (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, July 5th, 2016)

The perceived poor moral quality of 'bad apples' was often attributed to bad parenting:

> …teachers accused parents of encouraging unrest by giving their children a lot of pocket money. (*Daily Nation*, July 28th, 2004)

> The bubble of many years of poor parenting has finally burst. As the government establishes the causes of this wave of school fires, parents should go back to the drawing

> board and find their fault in the upbringing of their children. (Letter to the editor; *The Standard,* July 30th, 2016)

> But parents shouldn't pretend to be completely shocked by their children's criminal activities, by the way. In several instances around the country, they themselves either burnt or destroyed school property while protesting against the administration. And they wonder where their offspring got their ideas! An apple does not fall far from the tree, you know. (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, August 3rd, 2016)

The quotes above implicitly speak to a perception that parenting has deteriorated along with changing social conditions in Kenya, which links to the next section's themes.

A broken-down society

Another overarching theme was the construction of school arson as a function of a broken-down modern society. The current society is contrasted with an idealised past African society (that is, post-independence and before the enactment of the Children's Act of 2001) in which authority figures such as teachers and parents were fully in charge and could rein in 'errant' children through the use of corporal punishment. According to media reports, school arson was also a result of politicians behaving irresponsibly and the media reporting irresponsibly by carrying reports that fuelled the spread of school fires through contagion, as illustrated below:

> Experts say erosion of social values and poor enforcement of school rules is (sic) largely to blame for the increased indiscipline in schools, alongside copycat attacks based on media reports. (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, December 4th, 2003)

> Last month, the violence in schools was blamed on children copying the violent and teargas-filled picketing by MPs against the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. (Columnist; *Sunday Nation*, July 24th, 2016)

> So children watch. They observe that when adults, say, in the political space, do not get their way, they call demonstrations and generally become ungovernable. (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, June 30th, 2016)

> The culture of institutionalised impunity is the elephant in the room, as far as the recurring incidents of high school unrest is concerned. The students are following the examples of their national leaders. In this country, notoriety is a status symbol. (Columnist; *The Standard*, July 4th, 2016)

The authority of the teacher, for instance, was undermined by bad government policies aimed at protecting children at the expense of the teachers. One such policy is the ban on the use of corporal punishment.

> Since the government banned corporal punishment cases of indiscipline have escalated leading to destruction of properties through fires. (Comments by a senator cited in *The Standard*, July 5th, 2016)

As a result of the ban on the use of corporal punishment, the teachers were left at the mercy of students who had no regard for the teachers' authority.

> When the students realised how protected they are (sic) by the Education Act and the constitution, they developed an inflated ego, impunity and an urge to taunt their teachers. (Letter to the editor; *Saturday Nation*, August 6th, 2016)

The ban on corporal punishment was considered alien and un-African, hence the increase in delinquent behaviour among learners:

> Copying and pasting of policies from the so-called developed countries and adhering to international conventions disregarding our social and cultural context in the name of child rights is expensively unwise. (Letter to the editor; *The Standard*, July 7th, 2016)

Contemporary technologies, and especially social media, were also seen as a cause of the arson:

> On the other hand, the distractions of Facebook, Twitter and others can be overwhelming for impressionable young folks. Consequently, some students fall behind in their studies and will thus try to find the flimsiest of excuses to cause mayhem so as not to take exams. (*Daily Nation*, July 5th, 2016)

> The average boarder is, therefore, one who in all likelihood owns a mobile phone, is used to watching TV, listening to the radio and has access to the internet at home. Locking him up away from these technological platforms is like putting a carefree movie actor in a monastery…they will soon break free. (Columnist; *Saturday Nation*, July 23rd, 2016)

In the context of the image of a changing society, for which contemporary Kenyans are not prepared, some reports spoke of a gap between traditional forms of education and contemporary needs. This was, at times, related to skills deficits on the part of teachers and curricular issues:

> Training of teachers also needs to factor in issues such as how to handle students and boarding school management. (A report citing discussions held at a head teachers' meeting: *Saturday Nation*, September 9th, 2017)

> Curiously, the need for a review of the teaching curriculum has not been accorded the urgency it requires. It doesn't make sense to train 21st century teachers the same way teachers were trained decades ago. (Letter the editor in the *Saturday Nation*, July 9th, 2016)

These issues are seen to be linked to broader social challenges:

> Perhaps we have kept to the draconian and constraining systems for this generation of children to bear it. (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, July 21st, 2016)

> But then again, these young adults are under great pressure from socio-economic disparities, peer group pressure, an increasingly competitive environment and shrinking job opportunities after their graduation. (Columnist; *The Standard*, November 5th, 2012)

The extent of concern about social influences on students leading to arson can be seen in reports linking arson to terrorists and criminals. Kenya has suffered terrorist attacks and an upsurge in crime, and school arsonists are seen to be both victims and disseminators of the bad influence:

> Terror and criminal gangs have infiltrated primary and secondary schools, raising the concerns about the safety of students, a government report shows. (*Daily Nation*, June 12th, 2017)

Consultation vs retribution

Almost all reports analysed in this study suggested a wide range of solutions to the problem of school arson. The solutions were grouped into two: *consultation* (non-punitive or need for dialogue about the day-to-day running of school affairs) and *retribution* (punitive or a need to weed out or punish the bad elements).

The *non-punitive* solutions were further divided into various categories. First were those solutions that focused on *general boarding school life*. They included the need to reform the day-to-day running of boarding schools, the quality of staff employed to run boarding schools and improvement of living conditions:

> Perhaps we should consider running boarding facilities as semi-autonomous units headed by trained personnel in housekeeping and institutional management. (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, September 6th, 2017)

> To nip student unrest in the bud, we must improve living conditions in public schools. (Columnist; *Saturday Nation*, July 23rd, 2016)

> Schools should endeavour to create a happy atmosphere which will lower anxiety. (Letter to the editor; *Saturday Nation*, July 30th, 2016)

> …the ministry should employ full time guidance and counselling professionals and chaplains in every school. (Letter to the editor; *Saturday Nation*, July 30th, 2016)

> TSC (teachers' service commission) also directed boarding administrators and other key administrative staff to be living in their school compounds. (Columnist; *The Standard*, July 28th, 2016)

Closely linked to the improvement of school conditions was the proposal to abolish boarding schools altogether:

> We need to rethink the whole concept of boarding schools. (Columnist; *Daily Nation*, September 6th, 2017)

> Overhaul boarding model and expand school infrastructure. (Columnist; *The Standard*, September 16th, 2017)

Secondly, there were those solutions that focused on the ineffectiveness of teachers in managing boarding schools and managing learners' behaviour, as illustrated by the following extracts:

> …principals found to be fit to serve should be retrained in human resource management, team building, conflict management and resolutions and disaster preparedness and management. Most principals have no clue what sound school management entails. Their basic objective is to amass power and pursue corruption. (Letter to the editor; *Saturday Nation*, July 30th, 2016)

> For counselling to replace corporal punishment, as the ministry wants, teachers must be trained in psychology and emotional intelligence. (Letter to the editor; *Saturday Nation*, August 5th, 2015)

> He said understanding the needs of learners would also go a long way to end cases of arson in schools. (Columnist citing the president; *The Standard*, June 23rd, 2016)

> Your status as a trainer requires that you be a role model as discipline is concerned. You should therefore desist from engaging in activities that portray you negatively. (Columnist; *The Standard*, July 28th, 2016)

Thirdly, there were those solutions that focused on solving the problem of poor parenting as illustrated:

> Parents have been accused of abdicating their roles to instil discipline in their children to teachers, hence the unruly behaviour witnessed among students. They should not fear reprimanding their children from an early age. (Editorial; *The Standard*, November 13th, 2016)

> We should introduce parenting programmes, like "mothers' day" or "fathers' day" where mothers or fathers have specific visiting days to intermingle with their sons or daughters as they parent. Such programmes reduce homesickness and burnout among learners. (Letter to the editor; *Saturday Nation*, July 30th, 2016)

Fourthly, there were suggested solutions that focused on students in general. These included the need for guidance and counselling for all students, mentorship and the need to learn social skills, among others.

One newspaper report citing a survey conducted by the media house indicated that 42.3% of those polled recommended:

> Introduction of guidance and counselling programmes in all schools… (*The Standard*, July 31st, 2016)

Other suggestions included a recommendation for induction programmes as well the acquisition of social skills by students:

> Induction programmes for new students can also help. I have found these induction programmes especially helpful in passing the spirit and traditions of the school to new students. (Columnist; *Sunday Nation*, July 10th, 2016)

> Dr Matiang'i appealed to students to learn how to air their grievances with school administration instead of venting their issues through burning schools. (Report citing the cabinet secretary for education; *The Standard*, July 2nd, 2016)

Lastly, there were suggested solutions that focused on the role of the government. They included the need to review the curriculum and review the placement of teachers, among others:

> A curriculum review should be put in place to incorporate guidance and counselling and fire safety. (Columnist; *The Standard*, July 23rd, 2016)

> The teachers' employer also insisted it will continue to ensure teachers and school managers don't work in their home areas. (*The Standard*, July 28th, 2016)

> This should pre-empt conflicts emanating from vested interests. It will also ensure principals are not perceived to be representing partisan interests. (Report citing the teachers' service commission in *The Standard*, July 28th, 2016)

However, the main recurrent non-punitive suggested solution was a call to the government to involve all stakeholders in finding a solution and a call for dialogue between students and teachers/head teachers:

> As a way forward, the Ministry of Education should convene around table stakeholders' forum which can examine some of the issues raised by students. (Editorial; *The Standard*, July 3rd, 2016)

> The time has come for all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, education officials and the students themselves to work together to solve this problem. (Letter to the editor; *The Standard*, July 20th, 2016)

> In the meantime, principals and boards of management should continue holding meetings with students and address any grievances. (Columnist citing religious leaders; *The Standard*, July 29th, 2016)

There were fewer solutions that called for retribution/punishment. They included vetting of students to ensure there would be no transfer for troublemakers (bad apples), weeding out of incompetent head teachers, testing students for alcohol, increasing police patrols near schools and closure of schools:

> Students from schools rocked by unrest will be vetted to ensure troublemakers do not transfer to other schools, the Government directed yesterday. (Report citing a government directive in *The Standard*, June 28th, 2016)

> First, the Ministry of Education should vet all heads of schools to weed out incompetent principals. Many principals lack integrity. Some of them are not in office on merit. (Letter to the editor; *Saturday Nation*, July 30th, 2016)

> Teachers have proposed that students be subjected to breathalyser tests as part of measures to curb school unrest. (Columnist; *The Standard*, May 30th, 2017)

> …patrols would be intensified near learning institutions. (Report citing regional police coordinator; *Daily Nation*, September 4th, 2017)

> …schools should be closed earlier than scheduled to avert more fires. (Report citing a former university vice-chancellor; *Daily Nation*, July 22nd, 2016)

However, the main recurrent suggested punitive solution was the re-introduction of corporal punishment.

> …called for the return of corporal punishment along with counselling to curb indiscipline. (Report citing teachers' union official; *Sunday Nation*, July 3rd, 2016)

> Corporal punishment will curb indiscipline. (Letter to the editor; *Daily Nation,* June 29th, 2016)

> I support reintroduction of corporal punishment in schools. (Letter to the editor; *The Standard*, July 23rd, 2016)

> The government should lift the ban on corporal punishment in schools to help teachers deal with disciplinary cases that are getting out of hand. (Letter to the editor; *The Standard*, July 9th, 2016)

All in all, the suggested solutions lean more towards the adoption of a more conciliatory, consultative approach in solving the problem of school arson and less towards punishment.

However, the suggested solutions fail to consider the complexity of the causes; they are vague and sometimes impractical. For example, quoting the prime minister of the country at the time, the newspaper report indicated that the cause of school fires was madness.

This is a very serious claim. However, there is no attempt made in the newspaper report to explain further what 'madness' entails. The claim is not backed by any further information on whether there had been any assessment done to confirm the presence of madness. One of the suggested solutions is the strengthening of guidance and counselling programmes in schools. The extent to which guidance and counselling would work on a problem such as 'madness' is not clear.

In another article, a secondary school principal is quoted as saying that children are under a lot of pressure and can resort to burning schools. Referring to a counselling session he had with a student, the principal informed the writer that,

> One of them told him that he was no longer interested in studies, he told his parents he wanted out, but they were insistent that he should complete his studies; he had to a find (sic) way so that the school could be closed. (*The Standard*, July 7th, 2016)

The chairman of the Kenya Union of post-primary education teachers decries the helplessness of teachers in managing students:

> He said the ministry had made disciplining students so hard that teachers and board members are so helpless. (*Daily Nation*, September 9th, 2017)

What the union chairman is referring to here is mainly the ban on the use of corporal punishment. The ban on the use of corporal punishment is aimed at protecting children. However, teachers view it as an affront on their authority. The different understandings of the ban on corporal punishment would imply that guidance and counselling may not be a preferred solution for everyone.

Discussion

Our findings show that the problem of school arson is framed as a problem with multiple causes. However, there is more focus on the individual learner and how the learner experiences learning/schooling. Learners are framed as either those engaging in school arson as a form of protest or 'a few disgruntled ones' who need to be taken out of the school system. This is consistent with what Bantjes and Nieuwoudt (2011: 31), writing from South Africa, have argued, that when learners engage in misbehaviour '…the tendency is to attribute the misbehaviour to internal psychodynamics (to ascribe the problem to individual psychopathology)…'. However, Duveen and Lloyd (2013: 157) remind us that, '…individuals are so inextricably interwoven in a fabric of social relations within which their lives are lived that a representation of the "individual" divorced from the "social" is…inadequate'. Further, there is little in the newspaper articles on what the view of the learner is or even the view of the parent accused of poor parenting that creates the bad apples. This is despite the emphasis placed on the individual learner.

Technology was also blamed for the school fires. New technology is often viewed with suspicion and it 'creates ambivalent feelings in the public' (Wagner and Kronberger, 2001: 147). The use of the mobile phone, especially among school children, draws mixed reactions.

Linking the image of a student hunched over a mobile phone with school fires provided a 'good to think' trope (Wagner and Kronberger, 2001: 150) that helped 'explain the strange, threatening and unfamiliar phenomenon' (Wagner and Kronberger, 2001: 150) of school fires. According to Bantjes and Nieuwoudt (2011: 31), blaming society or parents for school arson serves the function of externalising the problem beyond the school setting.

The reports on school arson were mainly from first responders who included administrative government officials, security officers, ministry of education officials or rehashed versions of information contained in government reports on school fires. It is probable then that the reports provided by the sources were aimed at protecting and strengthening the prevailing social position and power through 'interpretations that facilitate acceptance of their preferred meaning' (Berkowitz and TerKeurst, 1999: 126). There was a lack of interrogation of the information provided. For instance, a recurring problem across the years is the lack of implementation of recommendations in past government reports on school fires and unrest by the government. This is stated without any further interrogation of why past recommendations have not been implemented. Ogola (2018: 80) has argued that there may be 'declining quality' and 'an end to serious journalism' in Kenyan print media, while Donsbach (2010:; 45) notes that journalists need a broader intellectual perspective to make sound news decisions. According to Donsbach (2010: 44), '…journalism has focused primarily in gathering news and less on connecting this information to other areas of knowledge'. Further, Donsbach (2010: 45) posits that journalism is the 'new knowledge profession' that requires certain competencies such as subject competence. Journalists need subject competence, among other competencies, to make judgements on the newsworthiness of events, to ask critical questions and find the right experts to confirm or disconfirm their news reports.

Lowe Morna (2012: 5), with reference to the coverage of women's issues in newspaper reports focussing largely on South Africa, has noted that sometimes the coverage lacks depth in terms of '…extent of investigation and inquiry…'. Further, the reports lack '…persistence and thoroughness of inquiry' (Lowe Morna, 2012: 6). Lowe Morna (2012: 6) further notes that '…news pages are too crammed with what the minister says' without any interrogation of the practicalities of what the minister has said. In the same vein, newspaper reports on school fires in Kenya are characterised by a lack of depth and thorough inquiry. The reports are framed using the '…the perspective of powerful societal stakeholders' (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009: 408), hence the lack of focus on the practical use of the suggested solutions.

A common ideal model for journalism is to adopt a scientific approach to reporting which is to '…gather authoritative data and then present it without taking a side in the discourse' (Berkowitz, 2009: 102). However, reporters gather information from sources but sources have vested interests (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 1) and because of these interests journalists may inadvertently '…reproduce a specific meaning or a specific vantage point on the social order' (Berkowitz, 2009: 106). Much of the time, media discourse involves struggles over meaning (Gamson et al., 1992: 382) with some preferred meanings becoming more salient because of the power advantage of the actors involved (Gamson et al., 1992: 382). In addition, Berkowitz and TerKeurst (1999: 125) have argued that the '…the relationship between journalists and their sources is a struggle for determining meanings among groups of social actors'.

The suggested solutions to possible causes were vague and impractical. However, the framing of the solutions to the problem of school arson brings to the fore the dilemma facing journalists in Kenya: should they adopt a liberal model of journalism or remain true to their African identity and reality with all its extant cultural beliefs, traditions and practices, such as the use

of physical punishment to rein in errant children? Contemporary literature describes the tension African journalists face between presenting themselves as cosmopolitan, and part of the global educated liberal elite on the one hand, and on the other as guardians of a threatened and oppressed African identity (Kanyegirire, 2006: 159; Nyamnjoh, 2015: 40). In what has been called a 'Jekyll and Hyde' situation by the African scholar Nyamnjoh (2005: 2–3), African journalists are called upon to participate in and promote liberal democratic ideals, while at the same time acknowledging the fact that contemporary liberalism is built historically on a system which denigrated indigenous African values and views (Nyamnjoh, 2015: 40).

Conclusion

The newspaper reports constructed school arson as an issue with multiple, varied causes and subsequently identified solutions to the causes. However, the social construction of school arson by journalists did not address arson per se, but rather afforded journalists an opportunity to make a commentary on Kenyan society. The issue of school arson, in summary, provides a basis for Kenyan journalists to make broader commentary about their society in a postcolonial but globalised context.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

Achieng, J. (2001) 'The death of school children remains a mystery', (Consulted 07 December 2018): www.ipsnews.net

Bantjes, J. and Nieuwoudt, J. (2011) 'A group-analytic formulation of an incident of disruptive behaviour in a school', *Psycho-Analytic Psychotherapy in South Africa* 19(2): 29–65.

BBC News. Kenya school fire trial starts. BBC News, 21 January, 2002, (Consulted 22 November 2018): http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1774052.stm

Berkowitz, D. A. (2009) Reporters and their sources. In: K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch (eds) *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, pp. 102-115. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis.

Berkowitz, D. and TerKeurst, J. V. (1999) Community as interpretive community: Rethinking the journalist-source relationship. *Journal of Communication* 49(3): 125–136. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02808.x (accessed 22 November 2018).

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998) *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2012) 'Thematic analysis' in *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology, Vol 2: Research Designs*. American Psychological Association, pp.57–71. http://www.academia.edu/3789893/Braun_Clarke_2012_APA_TA_Chapter (accessed 22 November 2018).

Bullock, C.F. and Cubert, J. (2002) 'Coverage of domestic violence fatalities by newspapers in Washington state', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 17: 475–499.

Burns, R. and Crawford, C. (1999) 'School shootings, the media and public fear: ingredients for moral panic', *Crime, Law and Social Change* 32(2): 147–168.

Donsbach, W. (2010) 'Journalists and their professional identities', in S. Allan (ed) *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism*, pp.38-48. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Duveen, G. and Lloyd, B. (2013) 'The significance of social identities' in S. Moscovici, S. Jovchelovitch and B. Wagoner (eds) *Development as a social process: contributions of Gerard Duveen*, pp.156-172. London: Routledge.

Entman, R. M. (1993) 'Framing: towards clarification of a fractured paradigm', *Journal of Communication* 43(4): 51–58.

Entman, R. M. (2007) 'Framing bias: media in the distribution of power', *Journal of Communication* 57: 163–173.

Gamson, W. A, et al. (1992) 'Media images and the social construction of reality', *Annual Review of Sociology* 18(1992): 373–393. https://doi.org/10.2307/2083459

Goffman, E. (1974) *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Griffin, G. (1996) *School Mastery: Straight Talk about Boarding School Management*. Nairobi: Lectern Publications Ltd.

Herman, S. E. and Chomsky, N. (1988) *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon.

Kanyegirire, A. (2006) 'Hybrid journalistic identities? Journalism(s) and NEPAD', *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* 27(2): 159–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/02560054.2006.9653349

Kinyanjui, K. (1976) 'Secondary School Strikes: The Art of Blaming the Victim', Discussion Paper No. 243. Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi.

Kupchik, A. and Bracy, N. L. (2009) 'The news media on school crime and violence: Constructing dangerousness and fueling fear', *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 7(2): 136–155. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204008328800

Leavy, P. and Maloney, K. P. (2009) 'American reporting of school violence and 'People like us': A comparison of newspaper coverage of the Columbine and Red Lake School shootings', *Critical Sociology* 35(2): 273–292.

Littlejohn, S.W. and Foss, K. A. (2009) *Encylopaedia of Communication Theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2

Lowe Morna, C. (2012) 'Promoting Gender Equality In And Through The Media: A Southern African Case Study', (Vol. 3). http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/media2002/reports/EP5Morna.PDF (accessed 22 November 2018).

Moscovici, S. (1984) 'The phenomenon of social representations' in R. Farr and S. Moscovici (eds) *Social Representations*, pp.3-69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moscovici, S. and Duveen, G. (2000) 'The phenomenon of social representations', in S. Moscovici and G. Duveen (eds) *Social Representations: Explorations in Social Psychology*, pp. 18-77. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Muschert, G. W. and Carr, C. (2006) 'Media salience and frame changing across events: coverage of nine school shootings, 1997-2001', *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 83(4): 747–766.

Nowell, L. S., et al. (2017) 'Thematic Analysis: striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16: 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2005) *Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*. London: Zed Books.

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2015) 'Journalism in Africa: Modernity, Africanity', *African Journalism Studies* 36(1): 37–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2015.1008128

Ogola, G. (2018) 'The Nairobian and the "politics" of tabloidisation in Kenya's print media: normative trends in the dynamics of socio-political and economic struggles', in H.M. Mabweazara (ed) *Newsmaking Cultures in Africa*, pp. 79-97. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Oxlade, D. (1973) 'A study of the English public school tradition in former government European secondary boarding schools in Kenya and its influence on other secondary schools' PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi, Nairobi. erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/.../Oxlade_A%20study%20of%20this%20english%20p... (accessed 22 November 2018).

Pan, Z. and Kosicki, G. M. (1993) 'Framing analysis: an approach to news discourse', *Political Communication* 10: 55–75.

Potter, W. J. (2012) *Media Effects*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Sifuna, D. and Otiende, J. (2006) *An Introductory History of Education* (revised ed). Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.

Teferra, D. and Altbach, P. G. (2004) 'African Higher Education : Challenges for the 21st Century', *Higher Education* 47(1): 21–50. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:HIGH.0000009822.49980.30

Tewksbury D and Scheufele DA (2009) New framing theory and research. In: Bryant J and Oliver MB (eds) Media Effects : Advances in Theory and Research (3rd ed). New York: Routledge, pp.17–33.

United Nations (1989) 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child', https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx (accessed 22 November 2018).

Van Zanten, A. (2010) 'The sociology of elite education', in M.W. Apple, S.J. Ball and L.A. Gandin (eds) *The Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Education*, pp.329-339. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Wagner, W. and Kronberger, N. (2001) 'Killer tomatoes! Collective symbolic coping with biotechnology', in K. Deaux and G. Philogene (eds) *Representations of the Social*, pp.147-164. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Wondemaghen, M. (2014) 'Media construction of a school schooting as a social problem', *Journalism* 15(6): 696–712.

Yakaboski, T. and Nolan, K. (2011) 'The Kenyan school systems' impact on public higher education access: examination of growth, access and challenges', *Journal of International Education and Leadership* 1(1): 1–13.

CHAPTER SIX: MANUSCRIPT 2

The "School burning Olympics": Social representations of school arson in Kenyan social media

6.0 Introducing Manuscript 2

Discourse on school arson did not just happen in the print media. It was also a topic of discussion of social media. In the print media discourse, social media had been blamed for fuelling the school fires crisis in 2016. Using Twitter as an example, this paper explores the social representations of school arson on Twitter as presented by Kenyans on Twitter. The results revealed that the discussions on social media were carried out not only by students. This was corroborated during the focus group discussions with students. However, it is worth noting that the absence of discussions by students does not mean that the students did not discuss school arson. It is probable that they opted to hold these discussions in more private social media groups/fora rather than Twitter (which is more public).

The discussions were carried out by adults who, in an attempt to process trauma, either empathised with the student or vilified them, thus projecting blame on to others. I draw comparisons with the school shootings in America and argue that just as school shootings have raised fundamental questions about how America views itself, the recurrent problem of school arson raises questions for Kenyans about what it means to be Kenyan in postcolonial Kenya. This paper answers research question 1B. This manuscript has been provisionally accepted by the *Journal of Community Psychology* (special issue on social media and trauma).

6.1. Manuscript 2

The "School burning Olympics": Social representations of school arson in Kenyan social media

Abstract:

Arson, in the form of the burning down of dormitories in boarding schools by schoolchildren, is a common occurrence in Kenya. In this context, many Kenyans have taken to social media to discuss the school arson phenomenon. This article sought to explore the understandings of school arson by Kenyans on Twitter and the extent to which students used the Twitter platform to organise school fires. Using the social representations theory and inductive thematic analysis, we analyse Twitter posts regarding school fires from 2009 to August 2018. The results reveal that most tweets were not posted by students, but by others. Secondly, Twitter users, in an attempt to process the trauma caused by school fires, adopted either a supportive and sympathetic response or the condemnatory firestorm that projected blame on to others. The ubiquitous nature of school fires raises questions for Kenyans on what it means to be a contemporary Kenyan.

Keywords: Kenya, schools, firesetting behaviour, social media, social representations, moral panics, compassion fatigue

Introduction

School violence is a global problem, and it varies in intensity from country to country. Furlong & Morrison (2000, p.71) have noted that the label "school violence" was first used in 1992 to refer to "…violent and aggressive acts on school campuses" and that it is a "catchall term that has little precision from an empirical-scientific point of view". For instance, Benbenishty, Astor, & Estrada (2008, p.72) have identified seven types of school violence: verbal, social (isolating a student or a group of students), indirect violence (showing a person's private pictures or spreading rumours), physical (fighting, beating or shoving), property related (vandalism and theft), sexual (verbal or physical forms of unwanted sexual behaviours) and weapon-related (including the use of knives and guns). Students or non-students may commit these acts of school violence. In this paper, we will restrict the term 'school violence' to acts of violence committed by students within the school setting.

Everyday acts of school violence such as bullying often do not receive much attention, but extreme forms of school violence capture national and international attention because the media highlights them. Toby (1994) notes that the media highlights the extreme cases of school violence because "...they are frightening, …they arise suddenly with little or no warning, yet with great force" (p.4). The type of extreme school violence that is highlighted by the news media across the world varies.

In America and Europe, school shootings receive the greatest news media attention (Parks, 2009, p.8). In America, the Columbine school shootings of 1999 received intense media coverage (Larkin, 2007, p.2; Muschert, 2007, p.67) and the incident was considered to be one of the worst cases of school violence. The shooting left 13 people dead and 23 wounded (Bockler, Seegar,

Sitzer, & Heitmeyer, 2013, p.11). In Finland, the most widely reported school shooting incident was the Jokela high school shooting of 2007. The incident resulted in the death of 6 students, the school principal and the school nurse (Atte, Nurmi, Vuori, & Räsänen, 2013, p.189). In Germany, it is the 2002 Erfurt school shooting, in which 16 students died, that received intense media coverage (Hoffman & Roshdi, 2013, p.363). In all the cases of school shootings mentioned above, the assailants died by suicide after carrying out the shootings. In South Korea, the media mostly highlights bullying (Lee & Oh, 2012, p.550) mainly because of its association with suicide among adolescents who experience peer victimisation (Hong & Eamon, 2009, p.612; Koo, Kwak, & Smith, 2008, p.120). Lastly, in South Africa, the forms of school violence that are highlighted in the news media include violent robbery, murder and rape (Harber, 2001, p.262). In summary, news media in different countries highlights the type of school violence that is most extreme depending on the context.

Background to the study

In Kenya, school arson is the type of school violence that is given intense media coverage and which results in robust discourse about violence in Kenyan schools. In the past, discussions on school arson in Kenya were concentrated largely in newspaper reports. The newspaper reports either articulated the general public's reactions through letters to the editor or conveyed the official government position which can often be summarised with the statement, "…wanton destruction of school property will not be tolerated" (Malenya, 2016, p.68). In 2016, the school fires crisis seemed to have reached a tipping point. Students set more schools on fire, and the fires were more frequent. The school fires occurred in more than 126 schools. Newspaper headlines reporting the school fires included, " **More dormitories go up in flames**" (Daily Nation, 1st July, 2016), "**More schools torched as unrest escalates**" (Daily Nation, 20th July, 2016), "**Three students arrested after dormitory set on fire**" (The Standard, 5th July, 2016) and "**Dorms of 20 schools razed in past six months**" (The Standard, 27th June, 2016).

With the growth of new media, school arson has become a topic of discussion on social media. Muschert & Sumiala (2012) have noted that mainstream media no longer enjoys the monopoly of setting the news agenda and further note that the internet and social networking sites are increasingly providing an alternative to mainstream media (p. xviii). In 2016, for instance, social media discussions seemed to take the cue from mainstream print media reports on the frequency and intensity of the fire crisis in Kenyan secondary schools. One participant on Twitter referred to the burning of schools as 'school burning Olympics'. It seemed as if the students were passing on the 'baton' of school fires (using the metaphor of the Olympic torch) from one school to the next.

Secondly, the discussions in the print media alluded to technology as a cause of gross indiscipline among students. Besides being a bad influence on adolescents, social media platforms were particularly blamed for fuelling the school arson crisis. Newspapers in Kenya carried reports about students engaging in copycat violence. The allegation of copycat violence is akin to the argument made by (Glenn, 2016) regarding the #FeesMustFall movement in South Africa. He argued that the reason the movement spread so fast across campuses was that students were communicating with one another and posting images and videos of the images on social

media which encouraged other students to join the protests (p.2). We use the same argument to find out the extent to which the burning of secondary schools in Kenya was an act of copycat violence.

This paper uses the social representations theory and thematic analysis, to explore the understandings of school arson in Kenya by the online community with specific reference to Twitter. We focus on Twitter because "…communication is predominantly public and allows fast and spontaneous information diffusion concerning reactions to happenings and news dissemination" (Mirbabaie & Zapatka, 2017, p.2173). The second objective of this paper is to explore the extent to which students used Twitter to organise/influence one another to burn schools.

Social media and Social representations

The increased access to mobile phones and Wi-Fi has not only changed the way people communicate but also made it possible for unfiltered public views and opinions to be posted on social media (Ahmed, Bath, Sbaffi, & Dermatini, 2018, p.218). Ogola (2015) has noted that since the early 2000s "Kenya's media landscape has witnessed a wave of transformative and disruptive technologies in the form of Web 2.0 applications, accessible through computers and now increasingly through mobile phones" (p.66). Inevitably, this growth has increased the participation of the public in national issues such as school arson. One of the main characteristics of social media is the diffusion of information. For instance, Starbird, Maddock, Orand, Achterman, & Mason (2014) have noted that the retweet function on Twitter facilitates diffusion through the quick spread of information (p.655). A large number of users with access to mobile phones and computers increase the reach of the information shared on Twitter.

Social media platforms such as Twitter create online spaces that encourage discussion around shared topics of interests that enable a network of users to connect with one another (Schuschke & Tynes, 2014, p. 27). The network of users creates an online community with shared meanings, but these meanings may differ from those meanings held by the general society. According to Moscovici (1988) "…social representations range from the hegemonic structures that are shared homogeneously by a society, or nation to differentiated knowledge structures that are shared by subgroups within a collectivity. This paper explores whether Kenyans on Twitter (KOT) (Ndlela & Mulwo, 2017, p.279; Ogola, 2015, p.74) as an online community and a subgroup of the Kenyan society, for instance, has a different understanding of school arson that differs from the commonly held understandings of school arson as represented in print media and government reports. Secondly, it explores whether Twitter, as a discursive space, provided a platform for students to organise and coordinate the burning of schools.

Social representations theory is suitable for this study because of its versatility. The theory focuses on people's feelings and thoughts about an issue under study and not the reality of the issue (Joffe, 2012, p. 209). The theory allows us to focus on the meanings people attach to the issue under study and not on the reality or accuracy of the representation (Joffe, 2012, p.211). Twitter users, in this case, can hold multiple views about school arson, and those views need not be the same as the official views presented in government reports, for instance. Social

representations theory, in combination with inductive thematic analysis, provides "inroads into the symbolic meanings that people attach to issues" (Joffe, 2012, p.211).

Methodology

The practical challenge for this study was unlimited access to social media data for analysis. For instance, Twitter's new API restrictions in 2011 have forced researchers to rely on purchased data (Felt, 2016, p.2). The cost of purchasing tweets from licensed third-party API providers such as *Gnip* or *Netlytic* was beyond the funding available for this study. Secondly, most of the API providers do not "… capture tweets older than a week or two and are limited to a daily quota of one per cent of the entire Twitter stream" (Felt, 2016, p.8), but the study focused on tweets going as far back as 2000. We, therefore, opted for the most practical method of accessing social media data with minimum cost. We accessed tweets through the use of real-time tracking of tweets for the period (2017-2018) and TweetDeck search for past tweets. We limited the study to publicly available tweets only. According to Bruns & Stieglitz (2012), messages that are posted on Twitter are public by default, and they can "be found by a visitor searching the site or tracking the Twitter stream" (p. 161).

We collected 1442 public tweets that had been retweeted 23,437 times "…mentioning specific words and phrases based on their popularity or real-time" (Schuschke & Tynes, 2014, p.31) posting of tweets. The search was limited to tweets containing the hashtags 'school fires crisis', 'burning of schools', 'school fires' and 'Kenya school fires'. Sometimes the tweets included the name of the school that had experienced a school fire, especially if the fire resulted in deaths. In such cases, the search for tweets included the name of the school. We further used keyword searches to capture tweets by users who omitted hashtags from their tweets. Although we had limited the scope to public tweets posted between 2000 to the present, we were only able to collect data from 2009. The existence of tweets only going as far back as 2009 is consistent with the growth of social media in Kenya and the growth of Twitter worldwide. Twitter was founded in 2006 and by the second half of 2009, it had 6 million users (Levinson, 2013, p.30). The study was limited to the content of the tweet and not the identity of the person tweeting. As Deumert (2014) has noted, care must be taken to ensure anonymity despite the public nature of social media posts (pp. 27-28). We used Microsoft's snip and screen clipping tools to create images containing the tweets. The images were then pasted in Microsoft word to create editable word documents that were uploaded to ATLAS.ti 8 for coding.

Coding

The tweets were read and re-read to "develop a deep and familiar sense of the semantic, obvious meanings of the data" (Clarke & Braun, 2015, p.84). Care was taken to eliminate tweets that were posted multiple times. If a tweet was posted many times through likes and retweets, it was only coded once. Similarly, tweets that just mentioned the keyword 'fire' but that were unrelated to the school arson crisis in Kenya were eliminated. We also eliminated stories that were contained in links to the tweets from the data corpus. The analysis was restricted to the content of the original tweets discussing the Kenyan school fires.

The second phase involved descriptive level coding (Bazeley, 2013, p.126; Saldana, 2009, p.81) in which segments of the tweets were identified and codes (descriptive labels) were attached to them (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017, p.6). For example, a tweet such as:

"R.I.P may God grant their families the fortitude to bear the loss."

was assigned the code 'sympathetic' with reference to the emotional reaction of the public towards the school fire. This particular fire had resulted in the death of nine students. The tweets were also coded using in-vivo coding (actual words and phrases identified from the data become the codes) (Saldana, 2009, p.74; Saldana, 2015, p.183). For example, 'bad parenting' and 'bullying' as causes of the school fires were some of the in-vivo codes.

The third stage in the coding involved grouping and merging codes into sub-themes based on similarities, repetitions and common words (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.63; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002, p.728; Nowell et al., 2017, p.8). Overlapping codes were collapsed into one broader potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.63). The aim here was to identify meaningful patterns relevant to the research questions.

The potential themes were then reviewed and refined (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.65) to identify those that helped to implicitly organise groups of repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p.38). The review involved splitting and discarding themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.65). For example, the candidate theme 'possible causes' of school fires was discarded because it was not comprehensively discussed on Twitter the way it was discussed in the print media (Oburu, Coetzee, & Swartz, 2019). The potential theme 'public reactions' was split into five sub-themes: 'scepticism', 'scolding', 'sympathetic', 'sarcastic' and 'humorous'. The review of themes was aimed at finding out whether the themes identified formed "…a coherent pattern" and accurately reflect the meaning of the whole data corpus (Nowell et al., 2017, p.9). The other purpose of reviewing the themes was to create themes that were "…specific enough to be discrete and broad enough to capture a set of ideas contained in numerous text segments" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p.402; Nowell et al., 2017, pp.9-10).

We further defined and refined the themes by assessing each theme to find out whether the themes were focused, not overlapping nor repetitive and whether they addressed the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.66). We selected the themes that build on each other and which coherently told the story of school arson (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.67; Nowell et al., 2017, p.10) as discussed on Twitter by KOT. Finally, we selected extracts that were relevant to the research questions to produce the final report (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Terese, 2013, p.402).

Results

We identified two central themes in the discussions on social media:

i) *Collective secondary trauma*
ii) *Digital vigilantism*

Collective secondary trauma

The discussions on Twitter were influenced by the tweets of media houses reporting breaking news of new incidents of school fires. Each tweet on a new fire created heated discussions and an upsurge of tweets referring to the fires among the Kenyan twitter community. The first reactions, as indicated by the tweets below, captured the effect of the sad news on Twitter users. Some of the school fires had resulted in the death of students. There were public expressions of sympathy as a result of the secondary trauma experienced among Twitter users, as indicated by the tweets below:

> "Our thoughts with parents, teachers and children…that have been hit by the fire tragedy."
>
> "Condolences to families of students…who have lost their loved ones in a dormitory fire."
>
> "My heartfelt condolences to families and friends of the…victims. We pray for a speedy recovery to those hospitalized."

Some of the tweets referred directly to the victims of the fires, including attempts to create a memorial for the victims of the tragedy:

> "We remember **MX** who saved fellow students at the cost of her own life."

Some tweets captured a process of acceptance among the users and trying to move beyond the tragedy through turning to prayer:

> "**ZFA** academy on fire…they were burning the midnight oil. But on a serious note, my school needs prayers, so does Kenya."
>
> "…I am saying a prayer for the young boys who are burning their schools. I'm holding on to the hope that their spirits will settle."

Collectively, Twitter users vicariously experienced trauma due to exposure to real-time reporting of incidents of school arson. Although the trauma was collectively experienced, it was possible to see individuals going through the stages of dealing with trauma in the way they composed their tweets. The tweets ranged from those expressing anger to helplessness to those indicating acceptance of the problem of school arson as inevitable.

Digital vigilantism

Besides expressing sympathy for the victims, there was anger and outrage directed at the alleged perpetrators of school arson and students in general who many Twitter users referred to as an 'indisciplined generation":

> "The burning of schools in Kenya is a clear indication of totally indisciplined Generation Z due to poor parenting by Generation Y."

One user referred to a suspected school arsonist as a 'brat' and blamed the parents. The tweet in part describes the suspected arsonist as:

> "…a spoiled disturbed brat … parents are to blame 100%."

The expression of anger and outrage took many forms. Some users outrightly condemned the students' actions and warned them about the future consequences of their actions as illustrated below:

> "Whoever started that fire and watched it burn those little ones …May she never come to know peace."

> "Kids burning schools in Kenya thinking they are so clever. We'll meet after ten years and show me if this helped you achieve your dreams."

There were those users whose anger was thinly veiled in humorous and sarcastic tweets:

> "Kenya's high school kids just upgraded their fireworks game…to Arson."

> "…it's like the school burning Olympics has already started…is the Olympic Torch in Kenya or?"

> "Happening in a school near you- 29 out of 47 counties in Kenya have been affected by arson cases so far."

> "Kids competing for the Kenya National Burning School certificate…"

It seemed from the tweets that many of those commenting felt a degree of fatigue with the arson issue. The school fires are recurrent and almost predictable. They happen during the second term of the school calendar. Some Twitter users expressed fatigue overtly and expressed a desire to find a solution through the use of the hashtag #EndSchoolFires:

> "Time to say 'enough is enough with #school fires #EndSchoolFires"

Other users wondered whether there will ever be an end to the problem of school fires:

> "Second term in Kenya's school calendar always brings arson cases and students riots in secondary schools. When will it stop?"

Further, users expressed fear that the school fires would ruin education in Kenya:

> "#Schoolfires will be the end of education in Kenya."

However, a contrary opinion did exist among other Twitter users with one user wondering whether the number of schools that experienced arson was significant enough to trigger such panic.

> "Folks take a deep breath knowing Kenya has >5000 schools therefore 75 having had incidents of arson requires perspective above panic."

More anger and outrage was reserved for the justice system in Kenya. Twitter users pointed their finger at the judicial system which in their view had made the problem worse due to lenient sentences for law breakers in general and school arsonists in particular as illustrated in the tweets below:

> "School burning dormitories in my opinion is as a result of the culture of no punishment for law breakers in Kenya."
>
> "How many successful investigations and prosecution of secondary school arson has the Kenya police carried out? Do they care?"

Below is an exchange between two Twitter users after a court hearing for an alleged arsonist. They question the decision of the court:

> A: "Bail for a murderer?"
>
> B: "Innocent until proven guilty that's what the new constitution says…."
>
> A: "…what kind of evidence is needed… to prove it?"

The exchange indicates that Twitter users view the criminal justice system in Kenya as too lenient, and link this to why the problem of school arson persists. The concern is not only shared by Twitter users. A tweet by the BBC Africa Twitter handle suggested that the view that the justice system was too lenient on suspected school arsonists was shared by the minister for education at the time:

> "Kenya's education minister demands more successful prosecutions to end arson attacks in schools." (@BBCAfrica)

The anger coupled with a sense of helplessness at the failure of the justice system to punish school arsonists led to a form of digital vigilantism in which Twitter users made harsh, drastic suggestions on how to solve the problem of school arson. Tweets that suggested harsh penalties such as crucifixion or the death penalty for suspected school arsonists were some of the most retweeted:

> "She (*referring to the alleged arsonist*) should be treated as a terrorist until proven…actually until crucifixion."
>
> "Jail these arsonists for life."
>
> "This is one of the reasons we should introduce lethal injection in this country."

Lastly, the results did not show any evidence that the students used Twitter to organise the burning of schools. All evidence shows that the Twitter users were shocked at the destruction of property and loss of life. The argument that technology and especially the use of social media had fuelled the school arson crisis was not true as far as an analysis of Twitter as a social media platform is concerned.

Discussion

Social media is as an integral part of society, and therefore any interactions or discussions that happen on social media are influenced by events taking place in the wider society (Quan-Haase & Sloan, 2017, p.3). In the past, school fires in Kenya have mainly been discussed in the print media and government reports. However, Salek & Cole (2019) have argued that in the 21st-century social media is integral to the construction and spread of information about a national crisis (pp. 34-5). Twitter users in Kenya engaged in online discussions about school fires, and as it is the nature of Twitter discussions, the volume of tweets increased as soon as the news about school fires broke out in mainstream media.

One of the main characteristics of Twitter is the instant publication of user-generated content (Levinson, 2013, p.30). It is this immediacy that made it possible for users to interact and collectively construct meaning around the topic of school fires in real time. First, school fires were constructed as a traumatic event that brought Twitter users in Kenya together as they tried to negotiate the meaning of school arson and attempted to cope with the trauma (Eriksson, 2016, p.365). According to Eriksson (2016), collective traumas create the need for self-reflection, a re-definition of the values that a group subscribes and inevitably creates a need to externalise the causes of the crisis and assign blame (p. 376-377).

The need to assign blame and cope with collective trauma in the online space resulted in an upsurge in the number of negatively-worded tweets with complaints about the behaviour of the current generation of children akin to what Pfeffer & Carley (2013) call a "Twitter firestorm" (p. 118). Johnen, Jungblut, & Ziegele (2018) note that an online firestorm is caused by "perceived moral misconduct, followed by many users' reactions within a short period" (p. 3141). This characteristic of Twitter discussions which are ephemeral and lack longevity (Ogola, 2019, p. 134) and last as long as the media focuses on the crisis. Further, the online firestorms are characterised "…message volume, indignant tonality and a desire for social recognition" (Johnen et al., 2018, p. 3140). In this respect, online firestorms have been likened to moral panics (Johnen et al., 2018, p. 3141) which are caused by "a condition, episode, person or group of persons" that emerge and become a threat to societal values and conditions (Cohen, 2002, p.1). Moral panics cause people to engage in mass vilification and a desire to find a "suitable enemy…responsible for the threatening or damaging behaviour or condition" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p.27).

With the school fire crisis, the blame was placed on indisciplined students and the justice system that did not mete out tough punishment to forestall the problem. The condemnation was harsh indignant and uninhibited. Suler (2004) has explained this harsh criticism and condemnation. Due to the online disinhibition effect, users feel less restrained, and they express themselves freely (p. 321). Lapidot-Lefler & Barak (2012) argue that the harsh tone may be a result of anonymity which causes internet users to feel unaccountable for their negative words (p. 435). On the other hand, Dunsby & Howes, 2018 (p.1) have referred to this "online naming and shaming of people who are convicted or suspected of a crime and subjecting them to harassment and/or condemnation" as digital vigilantism.

Although part of the discussion was infused with humour, Martin (2007) argues that humour can be used to enforce group norms especially through the use of aggressive forms of humour such as sarcasm and ridicule (p. 18). Ogola (2019) has also noted that Kenyans on Twitter use humour to "prosecute and deliver judgements on accused persons almost as a brazen affront to the formal institutions of justice, which many see as deeply compromised" (p. 131).

Whenever there is a school fire in Kenya, there are attempts to find out the causes. The growth and use of new media technologies since the mid-2000s has been blamed for influencing students and providing them with a forum to organise and coordinate school arson activities. Social media has especially been blamed for 'fanning' the school fires (see https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001241458/media-fanned-school-fires-new-report-shows). The argument is that students would share their exploits on social media triggering "contagion effects" (Vanderweele, 2011, P.240). However, (Fuchs, 2012) has argued that such social media panics are "…an ideology that abstracts from societal causes of problems and inscribes these problems into technology" (p. 385). He further argues that focusing on technology whether as a cause or a solution to a problem such as school arson is to "…search for control, simplicity, and predictability in a situation of high complexity, unpredictability and uncertainty (Fuchs, 2012. p.386). What an analysis of tweets on school fires shows is that students did not contribute much to the discourse on school fires. The discussion was controlled by adults who vilified and condemned students for carrying out the arson attacks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the discourse on school fires was not student-led nor influenced by contagion effects on Twitter. Blaming social media (as far as Twitter is concerned) is to "…project society's guilt and shame onto objects" according to (Fuchs, 2012. p.386). Secondly, the analysis shows that Kenyan Twitter users did vicariously experience trauma, and they expressed their sad feelings in their tweets. However, they also posted tweets that harshly criticised the students, condemned and vilified them. The harsh criticism may as well have ended up re-traumatising the students; not all students belonging to 'Generation Z' are arsonists.

This leaves us with an overarching question of the relationship between social media (in this case, the use of Twitter) and trauma and its processing (in this case, in the wake of the school fires in Kenya). In our data, as we have suggested, we can see two major responses to the fires – those that are supportive and sympathetic, on the one hand, and the condemnatory firestorms on the other. In terms of trauma theory, both these responses may be seen as part of an attempt to process the trauma, with the first method attempting to garner support or to create a greater support network, and the second attempting to create distance from what is feared by projecting blame on to others. The question of the broader social meaning of these fires for Kenyan society is one which we cannot address in the scope of this article. It may be the case though that just as the issue of school shootings has raised fundamental questions in the USA for how that country views itself, the ubiquity of school fires in Kenya may raise questions for Kenyans about what it means to be a contemporary Kenyan. This is an issue we are addressing in our broader project.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, W., Bath, P. A., Sbaffi, L., & Dermatini, G. (2018). Moral panic through the lens of Twitter: an analysis of infectious disease outbreaks. *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Social Media and Society*, 217–221.

Atte, O., Nurmi, J., Vuori, M., & Räsänen, P. (2013). Jokela: the social roots of a school shooting tragedy in Finland. In N. Böckler, T. Seeger, P. Sitzer, & W. Heitmeyer (Eds.), *School Shootings International Research, Case Studies, and Concepts for Prevention* (pp. 189–215). https://doi.org/10,1007/978-4614-5526-4

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *1*(3), 385–405. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410100100307

Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: an introduction to coding and analysis*. New York: New York University Press.

Bazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: practical strategies*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication Ltd.

Benbenishty, R., Astor, R. A., & Estrada, J. N. (2008). School violence assessment: a conceptual framework, instruments, and methods. *Children & Schools*, *30*(2), 71-81 11p. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/30.2.71

Bockler, N., Seegar, T., Sitzer, P., & Heitmeyer, W. (2013). School shootings: conceptual framework and international empirical trends. In N. Bockler, T. Seeger, P. Sitzer, & W. Heitmeyer (Eds.), *School shootings: international research, case studies, and concepts for prevention* (pp. 1–24). https://doi.org/10,1007/978-4614-5526-4

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology, Vol 2: Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, Neuropsychological, and Biological.*, *2*, 57–71. https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004

Bruns, A., & Stieglitz, S. (2012). Quantitative approaches to comparing communication patterns on Twitter. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, *30*(3–4), 1160–1185. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228835.2012.744249

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2015). Thematic Analysis. In *Analysing qualitative data in Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 85–103). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication Ltd.

Cohen, S. (2002). *Folk devils and moral panics: the creation of the mods and rockers*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Deumert, A. (2014). *Sociolinguistics and mobile communications*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Dunsby, R. M., & Howes, L. M. (2018). The NEW adventures of digital vigilante! Facebook users' views on online naming and shaming. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, *0*(0), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0004865818778736

Eriksson, M. (2016). Managing collective trauma on social media: the role of Twitter after the

2011 Norway attacks. *Media, Culture and Society*, *38*(3), 365–380. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715608259

Felt, M. (2016). Social media and the social sciences: how researchers employ big data analytics. *Big Data & Society*, *3*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/1177/205395171645828

Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *36*, 717–732.

Fuchs, C. (2012). Behind the news: social media, riots, and revolutions. *Capital and Class*, *36*(3), 383–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816812453613

Furlong, M., & Morrison, G. (2000). The school in school violence: Definitions and facts. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, *8*(2), 71–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/106342660000800203

Glenn, I. (2016). "Standing up for injustices"? *Litnet*, 12. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1245017

Goode, E., & Ben-Yehuda, N. (2009). *Moral panics: the social construction of deviance* (2nd ed.). West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Harber, C. (2001). Schooling and violence in South Africa: creating a safer school. *Intercultural Education*, *12*(3), 261–271. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980120087471

Hoffman, J., & Roshdi, K. (2013). School shootings in Germany: research, prevention through risk assessment and threat management. In N. Bockler, T. Seegar, P. Sitzer, & W. Heitmeyer (Eds.), *School shootings: international research, case studies, and concepts for prevention* (pp. 363–378). https://doi.org/10,1007/978-4614-5526-4

Hong, J. S., & Eamon, M. K. (2009). An ecological approach to understanding peer victimization in South Korea. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *19*(5), 611–625. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911350902987482

Joffe, H. (2012). Thematic Analysis. In D. Harper & A. R. Thompson (Eds.), *Qualitative Research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: a guide for students and practitioners* (pp. 209–223). West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Johnen, M., Jungblut, M., & Ziegele, M. (2018). The digital outcry: What incites participation behavior in an online firestorm? *New Media and Society*, *20*(9), 3140–3160. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817741883

Koo, H., Kwak, K., & Smith, P. K. (2008). Victimization in Korean schools: the nature, incidence, and distinctive features of Korean bullying or wang-ta. *Journal of School Violence*, *7*(4), 119–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220801974084

Lapidot-Lefler, N., & Barak, A. (2012). Effects of anonymity, invisibility, and lack of eye-contact on toxic online disinhibition. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *28*(2), 434–443. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2011.10.014

Larkin, R. W. (2007). *Comprehending Columbine*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Lee, S., & Oh, I. (2012). School violence in South Korea: an overview of school violence and

intervention efforts. In *Handbook of school violence and school safety* (pp. 541–553). New York: Taylor & Francis.

Levinson, P. (2013). *New new media*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.

Malenya, F. L. (2016). Students, violent protests and the process of self-realization in Kenyan secondary schools. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, *18*(2), 67–82.

Martin, R. A. (2007). *The Psychology of humor: an integrative approach*. London: Elsevier, Inc.

Mirbabaie, M., & Zapatka, E. (2017). Sensemaking in social media crisis communication-a case study on the Brussels bombings in 2016. *Proceedings of the 25th European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS), 2017*, 2169–2186. Retrieved from http://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2017_rphttp://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2017_rp/138

Muschert, G. W. (2007). Research in school shootings. *Sociology Compass*, *1*(1), 60–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00008.x

Muschert, G. W., & Sumiala, J. (2012). Introduction: school shootings as mediatized violence. In G. W. Muschert & J. Sumiala (Eds.), *School shootings: Mediatized violence in a global age* (pp. XV–XXIX). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Ndlela, M. N., & Mulwo, A. (2017). Social media, youth and everyday life in Kenya. *Journal of African Media Studies*, *9*(2), 277–290. https://doi.org/10.1386/jams.9.2.277_1

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis: striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Oburu, H., Coetzee, B., & Swartz, L. (2019). *Representing school arson in Kenya: an analysis of newspaper reporting*.

Ogola, G. (2015). Social media as a heteroglossic discursive space and Kenya's emergent alternative/citizen experiment. *African Journalism Studies*, *36*(4), 66–81. https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2015.1119490

Ogola, G. (2019). #Whatwouldmagufulido? Kenya's digital "practices" and "individuation" as a (non)political act. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *13*(1), 124–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2018.1547263

Parks, P. J. (2009). *School violence*. San Diego, CA: ReferencePoint Press, Inc.

Pfeffer, J., & Carley, K. M. (2014). *Understanding online firestorms : negative word-of-mouth dynamics in social media networks*. (December). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2013.797778

Quan-Haase, A., & Sloan, L. (2017). Introduction to the handbook of social media research methods: goals, challenges and innovations. In A. Quan-Haase & L. Sloan (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social media research methods* (pp. 1–9). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Saldana, J. (2015). *Thinking qualitatively: methods of the mind*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Salek, T. A., & Cole, A. W. (2019). Donald Trump tweets the 2014 Ebola outbreak: The infectious nature of apocalyptic counterpublic rhetoric and constitution of an exaggerated health crisis. *Communication Quarterly*, *67*(1), 21–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2018.1526812

Schuschke, J., & Tynes, B. M. (2014). Online community empowerment, emotional connection, and armed love in the black lives matter movement. In S. Y. Tettegah (Ed.), *Emotion, Technology, and Social Media* (pp. 25–47). London: Elsevier, Inc.

Starbird, K., Maddock, J., Orand, M., Achterman, P., & Mason, R. M. (2014). Rumors, false flags,and digital vigilantes: misinformation on Twitter after the 2013 marathon bombing. *IConference 2014 Proceedings*, 654–662. https://doi.org/10.9776/14308

Suler, J. (2004). The online disinhibition effect. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, *7*(3), 321–327. https://doi.org/10.1089/1094931041291295

Toby, J. (1994). Everyday school violence: how disorder fuels it. *American Educator: The Professional Journal of the American Federation of Teachers*, *17*(4), 44–48.

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Terese, B. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing and Health Science*, *15*, 398–405. https://doi.org/doi: 10.1111/nhs.12048

Vanderweele, T. J. (2011). Sensitivity analysis for contagion effects in social networks. *Sociological Methods & Research*, *40*(2), 240–255. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124111404821

INTRODUCTION TO PART 3

In this section, I present the social representations of school arson through an analysis of the views of students, teachers and parents as presented in focus group discussions with participants from four boys' secondary schools. Two schools experienced school arson in 2016, and two did not. The section contains:

i. Chapter Seven (Manuscript 3): ***"Untie our hands": Teachers' and parents' social representations of school arson in Kenya***

ii. Chapter Eight (Manuscript 4): ***"You know how boys are…": Adolescent boys' construction of masculinity and school arson in Kenya***

iii. Chapter 9 (Manuscript 5): ***School arson in Kenya: Culture, globalization and the politics of abandonment***

CHAPTER SEVEN: MANUSCRIPT 3

"Untie our hands": Teachers' and parents' social representations of school arson in Kenya

7.0 Introducing Manuscript 3

In this article, the first of the manuscripts that explores the social representations of school arson from the point of view of the 'insiders', teachers and parents view school arson as a result of the enactment of the Children's Act 2001 which empowered the child at the expense of the parent and the teachers. The discussions with parents and teachers revealed a deep sense of loss- loss of the African culture and authority. The fact that teachers and parents advocate for the return of corporal punishment as a solution to the school arson raises questions about Kenyan identity in the current postcolonial context. It also raises questions about childrearing practices and whether corporal punishment is part and parcel of the definition of a true Kenyan teacher or parent. This paper answers research questions 2A and 2C. This manuscript is being edited for submission.

7.1. Manuscript 3

Abstract

School arson, primarily burning down dormitories in boarding schools, is common in Kenya, leading to intense discussions among opinion makers such as government officials and newspaper columnists. Publications thus far have not reported the views of teachers and parents. This paper explores teachers' and parents' understandings of school arson through an inductive thematic analysis of focus group discussions held with 32 parents and 32 teachers in Kenya. Discussions focussed on the broad issues of contemporary Kenyan society rather than on the specific incidents of arson in particular schools. A central concern was the perceived role of international practices in undermining effective African parenting and disciplining strategies, with a broader commentary on what it means to be Kenyan, or an African, in the current postcolonial context.

Keywords: Kenya, arson, thematic analysis, focus groups, African identity, schools, childrearing practices

"Untie our hands": Teachers' and parents' social representations of school arson in Kenya

Background to the Study

School violence grabs international attention when it involves school shootings with multiple deaths (Finley, 2014). School violence involving arson, and which is perpetrated by learners, is not as "highly mediatized" (Muschert, 2013, p. 266) as school shootings in America and Europe. However, in Kenya, this form of school violence is a recurrent problem, and it results in the destruction of property, and sometimes results in loss of human life (Kinyanjui, 1976; Malenya, 2016).

The phenomenon of arson in learning institutions may be more common in Kenya, but it is not a uniquely Kenyan problem, and it is one which has a long African history. For instance, there have been recorded incidents involving arson in South African learning institutions. In the 1940s, for example, at Inanda Seminary in Natal Province, South Africa, in apparent response to harsh treatment by the headmistress and the poor teaching of English (Healy-Clancy, 2013), students set the assistant housemistress's room on fire (Healy-Clancy, 2013). Similarly, Chisholm (2017) reports another incident of protest involving arson in a learning institution at Bethel Training Institute, a Lutheran church-run institution situated in rural South Africa. According to Chisholm (2017), the strike was caused mainly by "…lack of consultation or proper communication with the students about the introduction of new disciplinary measures" (pp. 39–40).

In Kenya, the print media has coined the phrase "the curse of the second term" to refer to the recurrent and predictable nature of school strikes, unrest and incidents of arson. News of school fires is often received with shock, anger and condemnation expressed through media

reports as well as national and international debate on what would drive such young children to act so violently (Authors). In 2016, the school fires crisis seemed to have reached a tipping point with more than 200 secondary schools experiencing arson incidents. Most of these schools were boys' secondary schools.

Discussions on school unrest/school fires crisis are often carried out in the print media. The crisis has also been a subject of four government taskforces that have generated reports. In both print media and government reports, the discussions have centred around finding the underlying causes of the problem and attempts to make recommendations on how to deter recurrence. However, these discussions have been carried out by people outside the school system (journalists and taskforce members appointed by the ministry of education to generate government reports) and whose views are not based on lived experiences. Finley (2003) has noted that existing research into school violence ignores teachers' insights into school violence, and Ricketts (2007) has argued that teachers' insights into school violence are critical to understanding the problem and finding solutions. We adopt the position that newspapers and government reports provide the etic view of school unrest and arson. However, the people who live through the experience (teachers, parents and students) would provide an emic view of the problem.

The objective of this study is to explore the different understandings of school arson among parents and teachers revealed in focus group discussions using the social representations theory (Moscovici, 2001). We will report elsewhere on the views of students.

Methodology

Sample

We used purposive sampling because it allowed us to focus on the characteristics of the population that were of interest and which were relevant to the research question/s (Nieuwenhuis, 2007), and that would help us achieve the objectives of the study.

We used two types of purposive sampling to select the sample: typical case and extreme case sampling. Typical case sampling is used when the aim is to focus on the normality or typicality of the cases (Collins, 2010). The term typicality, in this case, was applied to select a typical boys' secondary school in Kenya that had experienced incidents of arson. Findings from such a school can be compared to similar samples. However, the burning of schools in 2016 in Kenya brought to the fore two incidents that attracted more attention than the other cases: one school was a national school, and another school (a county school) had seven dormitories burnt in one night. The two schools helped meet the criteria of extreme case sampling, that is, cases that demonstrate the phenomenon of interest in an extreme or in an unusual way (Collins, 2010).

A national school admits top students from across the country while a county school admits "B" students from across the country but reserves about twenty percent of the vacancies for students from within the county. For comparison purposes and to increase the sample, two schools of equal status (national and county) that did not experience incidents of arson were also included in the sample. In total, four schools were included in the sample. The sample was further stratified before the final selection of focus group participants. The teaching staff and parents were divided into two groups: male and female before a sample of eight teachers (four male and four female) and eight parents (four male and four female) were drawn purposively

from each school. A total of 32 parents and 32 teachers were interviewed in focus groups comprising eight participants.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were held with parents and teachers in order to explore their understandings of school arson. Focus groups were scheduled and conducted by the first author.

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Kenya. Further permission was sought from the respective County Directors and sub-county directors of education depending on the location of the school. Access to the schools was provided by the headteachers who appointed a link person (Senior teacher or Dean of Studies or Deputy headteachers) who liaised with the first author to locate key informants from among the teachers and parents. The teachers were recruited on school days during their free time (lunch break or after classes at 4 pm Monday to Friday). The first author interacted with the teachers and explained the nature of the study before selecting key informants. The selected teachers signed consent forms before the focus groups were scheduled.

The parents were recruited on the days when the Board of Management meetings were scheduled in some schools or during visiting days in others or parent-teacher consultation days. The link persons would facilitate the meetings between the first author and the parents. The parents recruited also signed consent forms before the focus groups were scheduled. The focus groups were held in the school libraries or boardrooms depending on availability. The focus group discussions lasted two hours on average. The longest focus group discussion lasted two hours and fifty-three minutes.

The focus group discussions were conducted between October 2017 and February 2018. The discussions were transcribed in March 2018 and uploaded onto ATLAS.ti version 8 for coding.

Ethical Considerations

The research participants were assured of confidentiality during the focus group discussions. The problem of school arson is sensitive. School communities that experience arson are sometimes forced to live with the enduring stigma. It is for this reason that the identity of the respondents will be strictly protected and any information that may reveal a respondent's identity will be anonymized in the results section. Ethics permission to conduct the study was also obtained through University XXX, Ethics number YYYY.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic analysis; a theoretically flexible method of organising, describing and interpreting qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The focus group transcripts were grouped in ATLAS.ti according to the type of school (national or county), according to whether they had experienced arson in 2016 or not (arson vs non-arson schools) and according to the category of participants (teachers or parents). The transcripts were read for the first time to check for typographic errors and misspelling of participants' names. The transcripts were then read a second time while listening to the audio recordings to check for accuracy in the transcription process. The third round of reading was done to anonymize the participants' identity before the transcripts were uploaded onto ATLAS.ti version 8 for coding.

In ATLAS.ti, the transcripts (further referred to as the data) underwent two cycles of coding. The first cycle of coding generated initial codes using phrases and words drawn from the

participants and the researchers' interpretation of the data. The second cycle of coding involved checking for repeated codes and deleting them and checking for typographic errors.

The final list of codes were then grouped and merged into themes and sub-themes based on similarities and common words (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). The sub-themes ranged from students protesting against bad school living conditions to management failures to teachers' failures to teenagers behaving badly due to hormones as well as lack of corporal punishment. The sub-themes were re-examined to identify the meaningful patterns that were relevant to the research question.

A further review of the sub-themes helped to generate preliminary/broader themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012) or "… tentative and temporary" candidate themes (Terry, 2015, p. 110) such as possible causes, suggested solutions, emotional reactions towards school arson and school cultures that make student unrest more likely. The review of themes involved combining smaller repetitive themes and renaming others to ensure that they represented the data (Clarke & Braun, 2015).

Finally, the main themes that helped to meaningfully answer the research question and coherently represent the views of teachers and parents were defined and named. They are discussed below.

Results

An analysis of the focus group discussions revealed that the discussions focused on finding out why children are engaging in such violent acts and what can be done about it.

Further analysis of the potential themes revealed three overarching themes:

i) *Influence of Western culture on family structure*

ii) *Crisis of authority*

iii) *To cane or not to cane*

We explore the three themes in depth below.

Influence of Western Culture on Family Structure

Teachers and parents reported that the problem of school fires goes beyond the usual problems of children protesting maltreatment by the school administration, insufficient food and bad living conditions. The teachers and parents expressed fear that the society, especially the structure of the family, seems to have changed due to the influence of Western culture. The quotation below captures this shift from communal family structure to more nuclear family structures:

And when you sit down and think deeply, I talked about the 19th and the 20th Century kind of, you know, the African child was brought up in a community of a family, large family, that was in the 80s, 90s, 70s. But now we are talking of a nuclear where people live in maybe self-contained houses, each child from age 2 or even 1 has a room… (**Ken**, teacher in a school that experienced arson)

The teacher's reference to a nuclear family structure points towards a view that this change comes with attendant problems as discussed below.

Parenting the modern child. According to the participants, it is probable that the change in the structure of the African family due to Western culture has affected the upbringing of children, resulting in a generation of children that are not grounded in African culture and values, hence the behaviour problems that are witnessed in schools. This is illustrated by the quotation below:

… our students don't come from the same kind of family setup. Some come from single parents, others are orphans, some parents are separated, absent parents. So, these issues of family

are coming back to school. Because when a student sees a teacher, he will see a teacher as a parent because the real parent is absent… (**Kanini**, parent in a school that did not experience arson).

Parents in another focus group discussion expressed the view that the generation of parents that is bringing up children is equally affected by Western culture. This generation has lost touch with their African roots, and therefore, they have nothing much in terms of African culture to pass on to their children. A parent summarized the view in the quotation below:

It's a kind of…it's a generational lifestyle that we want to blame on our children… Some of us, you don't even know about your cultures anymore, we ignored them like they are saying when you put on a house on fire, it's like you are killing someone. There is a child somewhere who does not even know what that means, and they are within this community. So, you see, it's a lot. It's a lot of other things. What we need to come down and tell ourselves is that the present parenting generation, after the 70s, has failed. (**Jeniffer**, parent in a school that experienced arson)

Liberal parent vs conservative teacher. The influence of Western culture is not limited to the family structure. It seems to be an underlying factor in the conflict between how parents and teachers manage children's behaviour. The focus group discussions revealed that teachers ordinarily try to enforce rules, but parents seem to adopt a more liberal approach towards enforcing rules. The parents seem more tolerant of the "modern child", but teachers hold the view that the child may be modernized but the society has not quite changed. The quotations below capture this conflict:

The "modern" child. And I have also put it in quotes that we tell them they are modern, but all the same, we should know the norms in the society have never changed. They

> have never changed. And even parents, when they bring their children to school, they expect that child, once they go home, they at least manifest that change which the teacher has instilled: good morals. At the same time, they are not supporting us while the child is at home. So, we find ourselves in conflict trying to bring out a child, the best out of this child. But once they are out of school, that thing is lost. (**Chengo**, teacher in a school that experienced arson)

The view put forward by the teachers is that the liberal approach that parents have adopted has resulted in children who are out of control and whose behaviour can only be managed by teachers. Consequently, the lack of support from parents in managing children's behaviour overwhelms the teachers as expressed in the quotation below:

> Interviewer: Parents stand accused?
>
> Respondent: Yes. So, we really are carrying burdens … There are also those parents who their sons wrong them at home during the holiday, "You wait until you open school, I am going to report you to the teachers." So, they say when schools open, I am going to report you to the teachers … So, they feel like the child has grown out of their hand; it's only the teachers who can handle them … (**Wesley**, teacher in a school that did not experience arson)

One parent, however, defends parents and opines that parents are not liberal; it is just an issue of "… children of these days":

> Respondent: [Translated from Kiswahili] The other thing, Madam, you know the school environment and the home environment are different. School must have rules. Even if you try to impose rules on your child, you cannot do that all the time because sometimes you leave for work and the child is free. The freedom at home is not the same as freedom

> in school. It is not that we are lenient; we try to be strict. When I get home, I will ask them why they haven't carried out chores such as feeding the cows. You try to be strict. We try to be strict but children of these days … [stares pensively]
>
> Interviewer: *Watoto wa siku hizi* (children of these days) … (no respondent follows up to explain what this means although they all shake their heads as though there's a silent common agreement about the meaning of the statement … loosely translated as "children of these days"). (**Anderson**, parent in a school that experiences arson)

Underlying the position expressed by the parent above is the practical challenge brought about by industrialization, urbanization and the structure of paid labour. These changes have forced parents, sometimes both parents, to work outside the home for long hours. As a result, continuous monitoring of children's behaviour is not possible.

Crisis of Authority

Closely linked to the influence of Western culture on family structure is the loss of authority. The changes, occasioned by the influence of Western culture, on the structure of African lifestyles and cultures have brought about a crisis of authority. The teachers and parents are no longer in control of how children behave. This theme constitutes three sub-themes discussed below:

Powerless teachers and parents. Teachers, for instance, report that they find themselves powerless in the way they teach. The knowledge they possess is challenged by what children can access through the internet. The influence of technology directly challenges the authority of the teacher as the "repository" of knowledge that children should learn. The quotations below illustrate this problem:

Respondent: They [children] are more hands-on on technology than the old media of reading books and all that. So, kind of, as a teacher, you are helpless. You cannot teach the skills which are required now by the kids and which have a lot of interest … So, kind of we are in a 19th Century world with 21st Century kids. (**Chengo,** teacher in a school that experienced arson)

Respondent: I still blame openness or unlimited access to information, especially on social media. (**Allan**, parent in a school that did not experience arson)

Respondent: Because students, I think, had a healthy regard for teachers then than they do now.

Interviewer: They have changed?

Respondent: They have changed.

Interviewer: Why? How?

Respondent: One, they don't think teachers are solely the stepping stone to a better future; they seem to have other ideas, especially with the technological advancement. So, there was a time students highly regarded teachers and they felt that with the teacher, they would go places. But now there are different views, students have a different approach. (**Agnes**, teacher in a school that did not experience arson)

The authority of parents has also been challenged. The parent's word is no longer the law:

Respondent: I think they are way, way ahead of us and even if you sit down with a million parents you will find that there's a gap.

Interviewer: So even as you grapple with "what is the problem", you are in different worlds?

Respondent: Yeah. Seriously there is a gap.

Interviewer: There is a gap between you and your children?

Respondent: There is. (**Janet**, parent in a school that experienced arson)

Children's rights. The main cause of this crisis of authority is the enactment of the Children's Act 2001 (Government of Kenya, 2001) which outlawed the use of corporal punishment to protect children from physical harm. However, both parents and teachers are in agreement that the outlawing of the use of corporal punishment is not African, and it is an affront to the authority of the teacher and the parent. The Children's Act "tied their hands" and they are therefore helpless in the face of gross misbehaviour by children such as school arson. This is illustrated by the views expressed in the quotations below:

Respondent: [Translated from Kiswahili] And, madam, what has mainly brought about this problem is denying the child corporal punishment. (**Sammy**, parent in school that experienced arson)

Respondent: This is something you need to tell them, let the child be a child. I am saying this because, in my observation, the laws which as a country we are adapting, my colleague has just mentioned that maybe in the UK, in the US, their law has really permitted the child a lot of freedom and they are facing a lot of challenges in dealing with these teens. Now, we as a country, instead of learning from their mistakes, we want to follow the same route, go through the same problems they are going through, yet they are trying to come out of it, but we are encouraging ourselves to go into the problems.

> Why are we not in a position to avert these problems and let the Kenyan child be the Kenyan child? (**Alice**, teacher in a school that experienced arson)

Respondent: I want to mention something … the government has also brought in issues that have widened the gap between the kids and their parents … it is very sad that you as a mother when you talk to your child … and they tell you about children's rights, you cannot cane me anymore … if you send me to go to the market, it's child abuse … (**Sylvia,** parent in a school that experienced arson)

Respondent: … the new Act talks so much about rights and as opposed to values. Now, if you suppress the values and you have rights, then you are going to have a child who will not respect you because of "I have my rights" … But school is more of training and mentoring; we teach them more of values than rights; respect your grownup, the teacher is a grownup … (Charles, teacher in a school that did not experience arson)

According to teachers, the Children's Act protects the child but not the teacher. The fact that the Act proposes punishment for any teacher found using corporal punishment makes teachers vulnerable:

Interviewer: You think the Act doesn't help the teacher?

Respondent: It is more friendly to the child and not the teacher. Actually, they don't protect the teacher at all. (**John**, Teacher in a school that did not experience arson)

The teachers felt that the Children's Act "ties their hand" to the extent that even in the face of attack from students (Oundoh, 2017), the teachers cannot defend themselves. These sentiments are captured in the quotation below:

> Respondent: Yes, I think our hands are tied.
>
> Interviewer: The teacher's hands are tied?
>
> Respondent: Are tied completely … That's why the primary kids in Samburu caned the teachers in broad daylight. There is no respect, by the way. Sometime back, these kids used to have some fear which I equate to some respect. It's no longer there. So, they do mistakes and there is nothing we can do. So, because of that, I am suggesting that all schools to be day schools. (**Oscar**, teacher in a school that experienced arson)

Teachers: our skills are undermined by the system. A contradiction arises when teachers say they have the skills to handle children's misbehaviour, but then they cannot because their "hands are tied". The expectation would be that the teachers would focus on alternatives to corporal punishment, but they do not. When asked why it is difficult to manage misbehaviour, one respondent says it is because there were punitive consequences for teachers who punished students:

> Interviewer: It's not easy. So, is it not easy because there is no cane or is it not easy because you lack other skills on how to handle this behaviour?
>
> Respondent: We have all the skills, you know, teaching, like any other profession, you gain more experience on the job. But then your hands are tied. Your hands are tied because if you punish a student, you will be punished by your employer. So, what do you do? You do that which you are supposed to do.

> Teach very well in class, carry out your duty as the teacher on duty, ensure they are in class and maybe they are attending games, and then it ends there. (**Lucy**, teacher in a school that experienced arson)

According to this teacher, it seems that the role of the teacher has been redefined: teach and leave the students to their own devices.

To Cane or Not to Cane

The discourse surrounding school arson in Kenya is often accompanied by attempts to find solutions to the problem. This was also the case in the focus group discussions with teachers and parents. Parents and teachers held the view that corporal punishment is the best way of managing misbehaviour by children/students. Hence, when asked what solution they propose to end the school arson problem, both teachers and parents proposed a review of the Children's Act to allow for the return of corporal punishment. The quotations below capture this sentiment:

> Respondent: *Kiboko ni lazima*. (Corporal punishment is a must.)
>
> Interviewer: *Kiboko ni lazima?* (Corporal punishment is a must?)
>
> Respondent: *Hata Biblia inaruhusu* (even the Bible allows corporal punishment). (**Anderson**, parent in a school that experienced arson)
>
> Interviewer: What do you do when your child misbehaves at home?
>
> Respondent: I cane him. I am guided by the Bible. So, I instil discipline the Bible way. *(Laughter from other respondents)*
>
> Interviewer: But the Children's Act 2001 outlawed the use of the cane? What about the children's rights that we have just talked about?
>
> Respondent: I have heard about them, but I think the cane works. (**Janice**, parent in a school that did not experience arson)

Respondent 1: The thing is, withhold that kiboko (*the cane*).

Respondent 2: And you know what the Bible says about that kiboko.

Respondent 1: Spare the rod.

Respondent 3: Not even that: foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.

Respondent 2: And to remove …

Respondent 1: Only a *kiboko* (cane). (**Malack** (1), **Allan** (2) and **Emma** (3), parents in a school that did not experience arson)

To illustrate why corporal punishment is favoured, a teacher explains how ineffective guidance and counselling (the alternative to corporal punishment suggested by the ministry of education) has been. In this school, the teachers had quietly reintroduced the use of corporal punishment. Another teacher recommends "guided caning". The quotations below aptly capture these views:

Respondent: We have tried G & C (*guidance and counselling*) and I can tell you for free that it is not working. What these students fear is the use of the cane.

Interviewer: You're sure?

Respondent: Yes. And in our first meeting this … this term, we actually decided that if possible, we should re-introduce the cane quietly *(Laughter by all).* But you know our hands are tied. (**Nancy**, teacher in a school that experienced arson)

Respondent: They should also bring this issue of guided caning *kidogo* (just a little bit).

Interviewer: You want the cane back in school?

Respondent: Guided. You know even before, when it was there, it was specifically done by the headteacher, even the cane that the head could use, it had

> specification on how it was being done. (**Michael**, teacher in a school that did not experience arson)

Discussion

The three central themes point to one critical issue: a perceived underlying problem of loss of African identity and culture. The loss of African identity and culture that parents and teachers allude to in the focus group discussions brings to the fore the history of Western education in colonial Africa. Healy-Clancy (2013) has noted that Western education was a joint venture between colonial administrations and missionaries, whose main agenda is summarized below:

> … '[t]he best education of youth born heathen, … must be given through the instrumentality of missionary institutions in their respective countries', although 'under the paternal care' of American missionaries there. (p. 20)

Similarly, Sifuna and Otiende (2006) have summarized the aims of the introduction of Western education in colonial Africa, thus:

> Colonial administrations and the missionaries attached so much importance to education that it had to be organized to inculcate the values of western civilisation in the minds of those who were to loyally serve the occupying power. The advantages to be gained by Africans were not primary objectives of colonial education. A foreign culture was imposed through Christianity and education." (pp. 189–190)

The above statements support the view that colonial education directly affected the structure of African societies because the values introduced were far removed from African culture. Independent Africa did not overhaul colonial culture. In Kenya, for instance, the current structure of schools, including boarding schools, is a carry-over from the structure put in place

by the British colonial government. In his memoir, wa Thiong'o (2012) explains his experience of schooling in a typical elite Kenyan boarding school:

> In general, the Alliance classroom of our times abstracted knowledge from local reality. There were no attempts to mine local knowledge. In literature classrooms for instance, … English texts were the norm and Europe the cultural reference. (p. 63)

It is, therefore, not surprising that in present-day Kenya parents and teachers would lament about the loss of African identity and culture among children and point out that there is "acculturation" of young children through Western education. They further point out that this "acculturation" is a possible major cause of school arson. Healy-Clancy (2013) makes a comment that resonates with this view:

> Like educated elites throughout much of Africa in the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries, mission educated Africans in South Africa found the skills and expectations they had forged in the classroom clashed radically with the constraints facing them outside … (p. 1)

A perceived change in African culture occasions a crisis because it challenges the dynamics of the relationship between adults and children. According to Sifuna and Otiende (2006), destroying social systems, breaking up extended families and encouraging individualism were some of the aims of Western colonial education. It is this breakdown of the African society that has affected the upbringing of children in Kenya and occasioned a crisis of authority. The extended family is no longer involved in the communal duty of bringing up children, and the parents are overwhelmed due to the pressures of modern living.

It is probable that the involvement of the extended family in bringing up children was beneficial, but literature is scanty on whether children engaged in violent behaviour in pre-colonial times and what, if any, measures adults employed to deal with misbehaviour.

One consequence of colonialism and the introduction of Western education was that Kenya became a more open liberal society that has become a party to international charters and treaties. However, these international charters and treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child advocate for rights such as a ban on the use of physical punishment which seems to go against deeply held beliefs about the upbringing of children. Results of an assessment of violence against children in Eastern and Southern Africa regions by Zuberi (2005) revealed that there is a shared belief by almost all countries that children should be submissive and that physical discipline is seen as an important and necessary element of child rearing.

For parents and teachers, a ban on corporal punishment has precipitated a crisis of authority. When teachers and parents express a sense of helplessness in managing children's violent behaviour, they are alluding to the conflict between their deeply held belief of using physical punishment to manage misbehaviour and the advocacy for children's rights that prohibits the use of corporal punishment on children. Sarrica and Contarello (2004) have noted, in reference to the social representations theory, that it is possible for different groups within the same cultural framework to take up distinct positions in the representational field. Although the government passed the Children's Act (Government of Kenya, 2001) and banned corporal punishment to protect the rights of children, parents and teachers consider the passing of the Act an affront to their authority.

The need to find a solution to the problem of school arson was central in the focus group discussions. The parents and teachers suggested that the Children's Act (Government of Kenya, 2001) be amended to make room for the reintroduction of corporal punishment. The irony of this suggestion is in prescribing a violent solution for a school violence problem. The increased need to re-assert their authority through advocating for the reintroduction of corporal punishment is akin to what Wojciechowski (2005, p. 120) refers to as the "syndrome of endangered authority" which is characterized by an increased need to maintain authority through the use of domination and force.

Straus (2009) has noted that "corporal punishment is so widespread that it is part of growing up for most children in most countries of the world" and that it is "taken for granted as part and parcel of the lives of parents and children" (p. 11). It is considered "normal", therefore, it is not surprising for the teachers and parents to consider it a default solution to school arson in Kenya. Straus (2009) further notes, "…those who advocate for corporal punishment also believe that the family is in jeopardy and society is in ruin because of permissiveness in bringing up children" (p. 15). The focus group discussions raised the issue of bad parenting that has brought about a new phenomenon of a "modern child". Part of the explanation for the emergence of a "modern child" is that the Kenyan society is getting more and more Westernized and urbanized and affecting the upbringing of children. As a consequence, teachers are dealing with children who are not well brought up, who are defiant and disrespectful towards teachers, hence the school arson crisis.

Adams (1998) posits that one of the reasons corporal punishment persists is that it is so rooted in the culture and history that it becomes difficult to eradicate, despite legislation (p. 121). Secondly, the widespread use of corporal punishment is a result of its biblical foundations. Those

who advocate for it often use the Bible to justify it: "He who spares the rod hates his son…" (Proverbs 13: 24). Many of the teachers and parents in the focus group discussions referred to this verse.

Conclusion

A significant feature of the parents' and teachers' talk about school arson is the fact that in all discussions, talk moved rapidly to focus on broad issues about contemporary Kenyan society rather than on the specifics of what has happened at particular schools. It is difficult to discern why our participants, consistently and across different groups, with whom we interacted all spoke about these broader social concerns rather than about specifics. We could speculate, for example, that parents and teachers may feel overwhelmed and at a loss as to how to respond to school fires, and hence broaden the discussion, or that the talk may be emblematic of broader discussions about contemporary Kenyan identity. From the experience of the first author, who is herself a Kenyan educator, the discussions are indeed similar to broader discussions in Kenya, but the question of why in our study the focus of discussions became so broad is not possible to answer definitively.

What is clear, however, is that discussions about school arson did indeed constellate these broader discussions about what it means to be a Kenyan, or an African, in the current postcolonial context. Throughout the talk there is the invocation of a supposed split between a constructed (and possibly idealized) past in which everyone knew their place and parents and teachers could exercise authority in a culturally appropriate way, and a contemporary Kenya in which appropriate cultural authority and discipline methods have been undermined by views and practices which originate in the West. The question of authority and how it is legitimated in

contemporary African and other postcolonial education contexts is clearly an important issue for further research.

Declaration of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Adams, R. (1998). *The abuses of punishment*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57–71). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/13620-004

Chisholm, L. (2017). *Between worlds: German missionaries and the transition from mission to Bantu education in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (Eds.). (2015). Thematic Analysis. In *Analysing qualitative data in Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 85–103). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication Ltd.

Collins, K. M. T. (2010). Advanced sampling designs in mixed research: Current practices and emerging trends in the social and behavioural sciences. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research* (2nd ed., pp. 353–377). Los Angeles: Sage.

Finley, L. L. (2003). Teachers' perceptions of school violence issues: a case study. *Journal of School Violence, 2*(2), 51–66. https://doi.org/10.1300/J202v02n02_4

Finley, L. L. (2014). *School violence: a reference handbook* (2nd ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Healy-Clancy, M. (2013). *A world of their own: a history of South African women's education*. Scottsville: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press.

Government of Kenya. (2001). The Children's Act 2001. In *The Kenya Gazette Supplement, No 95, Acts No.8*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Kinyanjui, K. (1976). *Secondary school strikes: The art of blaming the victim. Discussion Paper No. 243*. Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi.

Malenya, F. L. (2016). Students, violent protests and the process of self-realization in Kenyan secondary schools. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education, 18*(2), 67–82. Retrieved from https://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/cice/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/18-2-5.pdf

Moscovici, S. (2001). *Social representations: explorations in social psychology* (G. Duveen, Ed.). New York: New York University Press. Retrieved from https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2013/SOC571E/um/S.Moscovici-SocialRepresentations.pdf

Muschert, G. W. (2013). School shootings as mediatized violence. In N. Bockler, T. Seegar, P. Sitzer, & W. Heitmeyer (Eds.), *School Shootings International Research, Case Studies, and Concepts for Prevention* (pp. 265–281). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5526-4

Nieuwenhuis, J. (2007). Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First Steps in Research* (pp. 69–97). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis: striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Oundoh, G. (2017). Teachers beaten by their own pupils narrate experience. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved from https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/samburu/teachers-beaten-by-their-own-pupils-narrate-experience/3444866-3986116-avc2b1z/index.html

Ricketts, M. L. (2007). K-12 teachers' perceptions of school policy and fear of school violence. *Journal of School Violence, 6*(3), 45–67. https://doi.org/10.1300/J202v06n03_04

Sarrica, M., & Contarello, A. (2004). Peace, war and conflict: Social representations shared by peace activists and non-activists. *Journal of Peace Research, 41*(5), 549–568. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343304045976

Sifuna, D. N., & Otiende, J. E. (2006). *An introductory history of education* (Revised Ed). Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.

Straus, M. A. (2009). *Beating the devil out of them: corporal punishment in American families and its effect on children*. New Brunswick: Transactional Publishers.

Terry, G. (2015). Doing thematic analysis. In *Analysing qualitative data in Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 104–118). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

wa Thiong'o, N. (2012). *In the house of the interpreter: a memoir*. London: Harvill Secker.

Wojciechowski, M. (2005). The Polish education system and issues of violence. *Journal of School Violence, 4*(1), 119–130. https://doi.org/10.1300/J202v04n01_07

Zuberi, F. (2005). *Assessment of violence against children in the Eastern and Southern Africa region: results of an initial desk review for the UN secretary general's study on violence against children*. Nairobi.

CHAPTER EIGHT: MANUSCRIPT 4

"You know how boys are…": Adolescent boys' construction of masculinity and school arson in Kenya

8.0 Introducing Manuscript 4

In a context where excelling academically is 'everything' and examinations have an air of finality - fail and you are consigned to 'obscurity'- it was not surprising for the construction of masculinity to come to the fore in the discourse on school arson. In this manuscript, I explored the view that the recurrent problem of school arson, was in some instances, a performance of masculinity. It should be worrisome (especially to educators) when the students seem to suggest that the empowerment of girls in Kenya was causing them a disadvantage.

In an attempt to confirm the view that girls are performing better than boys at the end of the secondary school cycle, I sought data from the Kenya National Examinations Council. I requested for data on national examinations performance based on gender for a period of five years. (Note that the school fires crisis was at its worst in 2016). Table 7 below is a summary of the data:

Table 7: Grade distribution by gender (2014-2018)

KCSE GRADE DISTRIBUTION

2014

Sex	A	A- (MINUS)	B+ (PLUS)	B (PLAIN)	B- (MINUS)	C+ (PLUS)	C (PLAIN)	C- (MINUS)	D+ (PLUS)	D (PLAIN)	D- (MINUS)	E
F	943	4098	7124	11240	16166	21320	27871	34502	37268	35982	23073	2384
M	2099	7486	12326	17691	21798	25794	30532	35905	38619	37225	24376	3181
Total	3042	11584	19450	28931	37964	47114	58403	70407	75887	73207	47449	5565

2015

Sex	A	A- (MINUS)	B+ (PLUS)	B (PLAIN)	B- (MINUS)	C+ (PLUS)	C (PLAIN)	C- (MINUS)	D+ (PLUS)	D (PLAIN)	D- (MINUS)	E
F	664	4018	8282	13466	19060	24896	31160	36330	38681	38842	22929	2188
M	1993	7672	13016	19389	24844	29165	33040	37083	39770	40108	25303	3068
Total	2657	11690	21298	32855	43904	54061	64200	73413	78451	78950	48232	5256

2016

Sex	A	A- (MINUS)	B+ (PLUS)	B (PLAIN)	B- (MINUS)	C+ (PLUS)	C (PLAIN)	C- (MINUS)	D+ (PLUS)	D (PLAIN)	D- (MINUS)	E
F	83	1960	4400	7022	10104	14980	21833	30054	39320	54656	72210	15318
M	58	2688	6595	10201	13659	17242	22975	30975	41632	57482	77723	18054
Total	141	4648	10995	17223	23763	32222	44808	61029	80952	112138	149933	33372

2017

Sex	A	A- (MINUS)	B+ (PLUS)	B (PLAIN)	B- (MINUS)	C+ (PLUS)	C (PLAIN)	C- (MINUS)	D+ (PLUS)	D (PLAIN)	D- (MINUS)	E
F	61	901	2748	4879	7713	11973	18868	29767	42865	66958	91344	17191
M	81	1806	4487	7517	11459	15755	21454	31162	45474	68513	88017	18353
Total	142	2707	7235	12396	19172	27728	40322	60929	88339	135471	179361	35544

2018

Sex	A	A- (MINUS)	B+ (PLUS)	B (PLAIN)	B- (MINUS)	C+ (PLUS)	C (PLAIN)	C- (MINUS)	D+ (PLUS)	D (PLAIN)	D- (MINUS)	E
F	114	1239	3119	6400	10690	15782	24161	35764	48302	75540	84251	14097
M	201	2181	5181	10105	15682	20330	25946	35762	48714	73035	81441	16854
Total	315	3420	8300	16505	26372	36112	50107	71526	97016	148575	165692	30951

Source: Kenya National Examinations Council (Research Division)

There were more boys scoring an overall 'A' grade in all the other years except in 2016. There is no official explanation for these figures. It is also not clear how the students in my focus group discussions became aware of the fact that girls had performed better in KCSE in 2016, at least in terms of attaining the top grade. The discourse in print media had however alluded to the fact that the school fires were a protest against examination reforms. This almost suggests that boys had been engaging in examination malpractice in previous years. We may not know but if they did, this would be consistent with the view that when men (boys) sense a loss of power they resort to violence to recoup their masculinity. It could also mean that there is need to re-examine the social construction of masculinity in postcolonial Kenya. Is there room for boys who do not excel academically? This is explored further in the

manuscript. This paper answers research question 2B. The manuscript has been provisionally accepted by the *Men and Masculinities* journal.

8.1. Manuscript 4

Abstract

Globally, there is concern about school violence perpetrated by boys in particular, but despite repeated burning of school dormitories in Kenya over the past twenty years, there has been little research on the issue. Commentary on school arson in Kenya has been undertaken largely by print media journalists and government officials, with almost no research on the views of boys themselves, and almost no focus on issues of masculinity even though most arson incidents take place in boys' schools. Using focus group discussions with selected students, thematic analysis, social representations and hegemonic masculinity theories, we suggest that schools are arenas for the construction, regulation and reconfiguration of hegemonic masculinity and that school arson in Kenya is, in some instances, a performance of masculinity.

Keywords: Kenya, school arson, hegemonic masculinity, social representations, thematic analysis

"You know how boys are…": Adolescent boys' construction of masculinity and school arson in Kenya

Background

School violence is a global problem that varies in nature and intensity from country to country. However, school violence often grabs international attention when it involves school shootings with multiple deaths in schools largely in North America (Finley, 2014, p.11). In academic discourse, for instance, school violence involving arson perpetrated by school children is not as widely discussed.

In Kenya, school arson, and specifically the burning down of dormitories, has become common over the past twenty years (Cooper, 2014, p.592). In both print media and government reports, the discourse focusses on attempts to explain the school arson phenomenon and suggestions on how to prevent future fires (Authors, in preparation). The scant existing academic discourse on school arson in Kenya has put forward the understanding that students either use school arson as "an instrument of power that the structurally weak-like themselves can employ to serve their interests" (Cooper, 2014, p.600) or as a form of self-realization in which students "…pursue their own empowerment so that they can use the power to humble authorities" (Malenya, 2016, p.81).

In all these discussions, there has been very little discussion of the role that gender, and specifically, the construction of masculinity may play in the school arson phenomenon. In 2016, for instance, there were 126 recorded cases of arson in schools. One hundred and six of these cases happened in boys' secondary schools. While there were some attempts in the media to bring this issue to the fore with opinion pieces suggesting that the school fires were a result of the neglect of boys (Lungai, 2016), there is a lack of academic writing with empirical data on whether there is a link between school arson and the situation of adolescent boys in Kenya. What

is also lacking in the literature so far are studies that specifically investigate the link between the construction of masculinity and the recurrent problem of school arson in Kenya. It is within this context that this study is situated.

In the Global South context, studies that focus on men and boys have remained "relatively marginal" (Shefer, Ratele, Anna, Shabalala, & Buikema, 2007, p.3). Lindegger & Maxwell (2007) have further noted that most studies on adolescent masculinity are situated within the HIV/AIDS pandemic, declining academic achievement and gender-based violence (p.94). Morrell (2019), in an overview of research from South Africa, has shown that while South African researchers have contributed to global studies on masculinity there is still need for more research (pp. 40-41). The scarcity of academic discourse on the construction of masculinity among boys, and men in the Kenyan context, and especially in relation to school arson motivated the writing of this paper.

Using social representations theory, hegemonic masculinity and inductive thematic analysis, we explore adolescent boys' understandings of school arson, their construction of masculinity, and the link between school arson and masculinity.

Social representations theory and hegemonic masculinity

The theory of social representations allows for competing, even contradictory, meanings of reality to exist in the same community, culture and individual (Moscovici, 2001, pp.245-246; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005, pp.433-434). The concept of "polyphasia" (Moscovici, 2001, p.245) makes it possible to interrogate the different understandings of school arson among adolescent boys in selected schools in Kenya.

A key concept that is closely associated with the theory of social representations in this study is the social construction of masculinity. Jovchelovitch (1996) has argued that "…social representations are a network of mediating social meanings which lends texture and material to

the construction of identities" (p.125). Gender is one such identity. The use of the theory of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, p.77) allows us to interrogate whether there are different constructions of masculinity between students who resort to arson and those who do not. Further, we interrogate whether school arson is interwoven into the performance of masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity constitutes an idealized image of masculinity which men subscribe to and which is made up of a "repertoire of possible ways of being a man" (Buchbinder, 2013, p.94). This image is constructed within cultural settings and learnt through the socialization process. The theory of hegemonic masculinity has been criticised for conceptualising masculinity as a singular, fixed and homogenising construct that all men in a given culture aspire to attain (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.836). However, Connell & Messerschmidt (2005, p.837) have countered this argument and noted that different constructions of masculinity exist. Connell (2001) has argued that,

"…more than one kind of masculinity can be found within a given cultural setting. Within any workplace, neighbourhood or peer group, there are likely to be different understandings of masculinity and different ways of "doing" masculinity." (p.49)

The purpose of this study is not to find out who subscribes to the idealized construction of masculinity and who does not but rather to explore the different constructions of masculinity in relation to arson in Kenyan secondary schools. We take cognisance of the fact that the concept of hegemonic masculinities has opened up spaces for critical feminist scholarship on gender power relations and identifications, and how these play out and are constructed between men- not just between men and women.

We posit in this study that schools remain arenas for the construction of masculinity, including violent masculinities, especially during adolescence. The adolescent years are not only

characterised by the construction of gender identity (Mandel & Shakeshaft, 1999, p.76) but also the underdevelopment of self-control making it easy for adolescents to engage in risky activities (Romer, 2010, p.264). A lack of understanding of the intersection between adolescent boys' construction of masculinity in the Kenyan context and the phenomenon of school arson limits our understanding of school arson and the ability of teachers, parents and policy makers to solve the problem.

Methodology

This study is part of a larger study on school arson in Kenya. In this paper, we report on the views of students. We report elsewhere on the views of parents and teachers.

The Sample

We used purposive sampling to select the four schools (two schools from Western Kenya, one from Rift Valley and one from Nairobi) since it allowed us to focus on finding participants who would provide information on the phenomenon of interest (school arson)(Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.79). Two types of purposive sampling were used: typical case and extreme case sampling. Typicality or normality of cases (Collins, 2010, p. 358) was applied to identify typical boys' secondary school in Kenya that had experienced school arson. Typicality in this study refers to a public government boys' secondary school that experienced arson.

Once the schools were identified, extreme case sampling was applied to select two schools because of the uniqueness of these particular school fires that happened in 2016. Firstly, a school fire happened in a national school; a type of school that does not ordinarily experience school arson and which admits top students from across the country. Secondly, one county school had a record eight dormitories set on fire in one night. A county school admits 'B' students from across the country but reserves twenty per cent of the vacancies for students from within the county. Both schools were boys' schools. These two schools (one that does not ordinarily

experience arson and one that had the highest number of buildings set on fire) were included in the sample because they demonstrate the phenomenon of school arson in an extreme or in an unusual way (Collins, 2010, p.358). For comparison purposes and to increase the sample size, two schools of equal status that did not experience incidents of arson were included in the sample. A total of two national schools and two county schools were included in the final sample. The sample was further stratified before the final selection of focus group participants. Only students who were already enrolled in their respective schools in 2016 were included in the sample (two years before data collection). The participants were drawn from the 2018 Form 3 and Form 4 students (age range between 15-18 years). A total of 32 students participated in the focus group discussions (8 participants per group and one group per school).

Focus groups

Focus group discussions were conducted with the students to explore their understanding of school arson and to explore the relationship between school arson and their construction of masculinity. Ten semi-structured interview questions were used to guide the focus group discussions (Bryman, 2012, p.508). Focus groups were the most appropriate method of collecting data because they allowed for new understandings to be generated as participants interacted with one another (Rossman & Rallis, 2017, p.324) and there was no danger of some participants dominating discussions because these were single-sex groups with adolescent boys (Barbour, 2007, p.97). The stigma associated with school arson and the emotive nature of the experience, especially for those students who were affected, made the focus group discussion the most ideal because of the mutual support that participants provide for one another (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 300). The discussions were scheduled, conducted and moderated by the first author.

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Kenya. Further permission was sought from the

respective County Directors and sub-county directors of education depending on the location of the school. Access to the schools was provided by the headteachers who appointed a link person (Senior teacher or Dean of Studies or Deputy headteachers) who liaised with the first author to locate key informants from among the students.

Since these were boarding schools, the process of recruiting the participants involved two stages. The first author interacted with the students and explained the nature of the study before selecting key informants. The key informants included student leaders, prefects, class leaders and ordinary members of the student body. The participants were given consent forms for minors and parent consent forms between September and October 2017. The first author discussed the content and requirements of the consent forms and asked the students to discuss both sets of forms with their parents during the holidays. The second, stage involved collecting the consent forms from the students when schools opened in January 2018.

The focus group discussions were conducted between January and early March 2018 and held in the school libraries or school boardrooms depending on availability. Each group had eight participants. The discussions were audio-recorded, and they lasted an average of two and a half hours. The longest discussion lasted three hours, five minutes. The audio files were transcribed in March 2018.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics permission to conduct the study was also obtained through University XXX, Ethics number YYYY. All participants provided written informed consent.

Data Analysis

For this analysis, we transcribed the audio recordings verbatim. The first author read the transcripts repeatedly, in order to become familiar with the data, to check the transcriptions for

accuracy, and to anonymise the participants' identity before the transcripts were uploaded onto ATLAS.ti v. 8 for coding. In ATLAS. ti, the focus group transcripts were sorted and grouped according to the type of school (national or county) and according to whether the school had experienced arson in 2016 or not (arson vs non-arson schools).

The data were analysed inductively, using steps consistent with thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a creative and theoretically flexible method of organising, describing and interpreting qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2015).

In ATLAS. ti, the transcripts (further referred to as the data) underwent two cycles of coding. The first cycle of coding generated initial codes using phrases and words drawn from the participants and the researchers' interpretation of the data. The second cycle of coding involved checking for duplicate/similar codes and merging or deleting them.

The final list of codes was used to create groups that were later merged into sub-themes based on similarities and common words (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.63; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017, p.8). For instance, groups such as 'no guidance' and 'no parental protection' were grouped under the sub-theme 'perceived parental neglect'. The code outputs for the key sub-themes were re-examined to generate meaningful patterns that were relevant to the research question.

A further review of the sub-themes helped identify preliminary (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 63) or "… tentative and temporary" candidate themes (Terry, 2015, p.110) such as 'cowardice is incompatible with being a man', 'school failure is the end of the world', and 'pressure to conform is stronger for boys' among others. These themes were further reviewed by combining smaller repetitive themes and renaming others to ensure that they represented the data (Clarke & Braun, 2015, p.94).

Finally, the candidate themes were reviewed, and the overarching theme that helped to meaningfully answer the research question and coherently represent the views of the students was developed: *the construction of masculinity* which we now discuss in depth.

Results

In the existing discourse about school arson in Kenya, the dominant view (expressed in the print media and in government reports) is that students are often protesting maltreatment and bad living conditions. However, in the focus group discussions, the students were more concerned with countering the misrepresentation of their problems (especially by the media) and opted to tell their own story by bringing to the fore the under-explored aspect of how schools through their rules, routines and expectations cause frustration that leads to violence. The discourse expanded to almost conflate school arson with the construction and enactment of masculinity.

Construction of Masculinity

The students' understanding of school arson seemed intertwined with their understanding of the socially prescribed behaviours expected of a man. The construction of masculinity came to the fore as an explanation for why more boys' schools were set on fire in 2016. The students' views were revealed through the two sub-themes discussed below.

We are not taken care of. According to the students, the anger and frustration expressed through setting school buildings on fire was a result of the perceived neglect of boys by parents and the society. The students expressed concern that boys are expected to navigate 'growing up as men' on their own. They expressed feelings of abandonment and neglect, especially when it comes to dealing with challenges brought about by schooling. According to the students, parents

do not provide a listening ear when they share problems regarding learning difficulties or bullying by both students and teachers. Instead, they are told to 'learn to survive'.

> RESPONDENT: They *(referring to their parents)* are maintaining that a boy child can take care of himself. *Mwanamme* (A man) …. *(hesitates and stares)*
>
> INTERVIEWER: *Mwanamme* (A man) can survive?
>
> RESPONDENT: Yeah. Actually, but I don't think you can just grow up as a boy then you become a man just that way.
>
> INTERVIEWER: You have to be taken care of?
>
> RESPONDENT: Yeah. (Alan, 18 years old, County school that experienced arson)

In the students' view, the parents and the society at large are more interested in taking care of the girls at the expense of the boys. These sentiments are captured in the quotation below:

> INTERVIEWER: What do you mean girls are supported? By whom?
>
> RESPONDENT: Everywhere in Kenya, there are these NGOs running for the girl child, girl child, girl child, and then they are given everything they need. But then you come to boys' schools, we are told you just ask for pocket money and you're told … "You go, it will come in the following two weeks." (Brian, 17 years old, County school that did not experience arson)

The perceived neglect extends to the government's neglect of boarding facilities in boys' schools as expressed in the two quotations below:

> When you look at the boys' schools, they look awkward. The parents have to come to do something so that they can make their children more comfortable in school. I think that's one of the reasons why the students had to burn the schools

> to express their feelings. (Kiran, 18 years old, national school that did not experience arson)
>
> It shows, actually. When you are talking about anything is about protecting the girl child, protect the girl child. No one has come up and said we are forgetting the boy child, …. So, by doing this, … the government facilitates most of the girls' schools. But the boys' schools, they are neglected. (Zac, 16 years old, County school that did not experience arson)

There was a perception among the respondents that girls are largely favoured in national examinations and in the type of opportunities available to support girls academically. The two quotations below capture these sentiments:

> "But then the girl child is obviously getting attention more than the boy child. That has been proven. So, like for things like sponsorships, you get the girls getting more sponsorships or the girls are sponsored and then the boys are not sponsored. And when a girl passes exams, it's broadcast widely as if it's something big and they ask where the boys are. Things like that." (Jan, 18 years old, National school that experienced arson)
>
> "… I agree with that story about girls being pampered … like let's say … in 2016, there was this trend going on about the girl child against the boy child, if it comes to examinations, the girl child pass mark was set lower than the boy child. (Mat, 17 years old, National school that did not experience arson)

Signifiers of masculinity

During the focus group discussion, we also sought to explore students' understanding of what it means to be 'a man' in the Kenyan context. Specifically, we explored students' perceptions of what behaviours define a Kenyan man, and these are summarised below:

Doing well academically. In the students' view a man is expected to lead and to demonstrate competence in whatever tasks they undertake as illustrated in the quotation below:

> Like what he said that in the society, men are expected to be superior in everything. (Ken, 16 years, National school that did not experience arson)

This expectation to lead extends to leading in academic achievement. According to the students, poor academic achievement is not an option. Students understood failure as a threat to masculinity especially if outperformed academically by girls.

> INTERVIEWER: Does failure threaten you?
>
> RESPONDENT: Yes, a lot.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Why?
>
> RESPONDENT: It seems like the end.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Huh?
>
> RESPONDENT: It seems like the end of the world.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Why is it the end of the world?
>
> RESPONDENT: I can't imagine myself being a tout. (Duncan, 18 years old, National school that experienced arson)

The quotation above captures the dread school failure evokes for a boy. School failure conflicts with the expectations of 'being a man' because of the strong perception that it deprives one of power and status. Reference to the term 'tout' (a low-level paying job) shows the perception of a strong link between school failure and lack of economic power. Lack of economic power translates to no superiority in everything. In the quotations below, the students expressed their views about why failure is worse when it is accompanied by defeat by girls:

> INTERVIEWER: If you fail, you are not a man? …

RESPONDENT: If you fail, you are good to go. As in they don't talk much about it but if you fail and you are beaten by a girl, that's another story altogether. *(Laughter from other respondents)* (George, 17 years old, National school that experienced arson)

INTERVIEWER: So, if you are beaten, you are not a man?

RESPONDENT: Okay, if you are beaten, … if you are beaten in academics by girls, you are not a man.

INTERVIEWER: If girls perform better than you in examinations, then you are not a man?

RESPONDENT: Yes. They have taken your place.

RESPONDENT: Men are supposed to be the head.

RESPONDENT: You are supposed to be the head.

THE INTERVIEWER: You are supposed to be the heads?

RESPONDENT: According to the Bible. (Eric, 16 years, National school that did not experience arson)

The fear of being outperformed by girls is not unfounded. In the quotation below, the respondent explains how a boy who does not excel in school, especially if a girl outperforms him in national examinations, is taunted:

To add to his point, if the girls pass more than you …and then you are at home and your parents… or you are in your estate, somebody comes and tells you, "*We ulishindwa na wasichana*?" (Girls outperformed you?) … *Unaulizwa,* (They ask you) "When they were studying, where were you? You were with your phone. … You were roaming around. … You were betting. You really get frustrated. (Sam, 17 years, County school that did not experience arson)

Further probing about exam malpractice yielded a response to that effect although there is an element of disidentification (situating themselves within and outside the exam malpractice discourse) as illustrated in the quotation below:

INTERVIEWER: But you see, you are giving me a very interesting story. A man is expected to be superior, he should pass exams, but again you are telling me they want to cheat in exams?

RESPONDENT: You see, not everybody. A certain group.

INTERVIEWER: A certain group of people?

RESPONDENT: Like now in that school XXX …They want shortcuts. (Kaz, 17 years, County school that experienced arson)

The quotation above alludes, in a nuanced way, to another key signifier of masculinity: risk-taking behaviour. In their view, exam malpractice provides an easy way of attaining exam success despite the risk involved.

Playing sport and watching sport games. According to the students, masculinity is also marked by playing sport and being able to watch sport - especially football - whenever it suits them. The responses indicated that football was 'part of being a man'. In these quotations, students confirm that the construction and performance of masculinity is linked to sports and sporting prowess:

INTERVIEWER: Why? Football is part and parcel of you?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, like makeup is part of a girl.

INTERVIEWER: Football is part of –

RESPONDENT: Part of being a man.

INTERVIEWER: Part of being a man?

RESPONDENT: Yes. (Paul, 18 years, National school that did not experience arson)

In another focus group discussion, the students suggested that teachers sometimes cause trouble for themselves and invite a power contest with students when they deny them entertainment in the form of watching football.

INTERVIEWER: You are telling me it is possible to burn a dormitory because the teacher on duty tells you not to watch football?

RESPONDENT1: Very much possible

RESPONDENT 2: A football match is a big issue.

INTERVIEWER: A football match is a big issue. Why is it a big issue? Hold on, let me hear his explanation.

RESPONDENT 1: A teacher who denies boys football wants to trouble. We are passionate fans. It is just part of a boy's life. We like football. (Oscar (1), 18 years old and Russ (2), 17 years old, County school that did not experience arson)

We are not cowards. The image of a 'strong courageous man' was also revealed in the explanations that students gave for burning schools. According to the students, there was the perception that not burning a school was a demonstration of cowardice illustrated by the quotations below:

There is that self-confidence that you are defending. And so, there are some schools that burned out of that feeling … *'Kama unyonge ni kutochoma shule, wacha tuchome'*. (Translation: if cowardice is equivalent to not burning a school, then let us burn) (Luke, 18 years, County school that did not experience arson)

RESPONDENT: Some of them might have just, let's say, thought that at least the teachers will know that we are serious, as in we are not -- how will I put it?

INTERVIEWER: You are not cowards?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, we are men.

INTERVIEWER: You are men?

RESPONDENT: Yeah. So… that's one of the reasons. (Peter, 18 years, National school that experienced arson)

The idea of demonstrating that they are not cowards is also captured differently in the discussions with students in a school that experienced arson. According to the respondents, the alleged perpetrators of school fires called themselves 'freedom fighters' fighting for the rights of their fellow students, as illustrated in the quotation below:

> And so, what they did, immediately they put the first dorm on fire, they took a selfie and just made it public with the title 'freedom fighters'. (Justo, 17 years, County school that experienced arson)

The very idea of referring to the alleged arsonists as 'freedom fighters' raises the question of why the students would want to be 'freed' from school, a space considered safe for children. All in all, the construction of courage as part and parcel of what it means to be a man kept recurring in the focus group discussions.

Yielding to peer pressure. The students also acknowledged that one of the reasons more boys' schools experienced school arson was due to group pressure.

> INTERVIEWER: You succumb more to peer pressure more than they *(girls)* do?
>
> RESPONDENT: Yes.
>
> RESPONDENT: You know some girls can't go with the group … because some girls fear. But boys, if boys have said do something, they all do.

> RESPONDENT: They surrender to group pressure. (Nash, 16 years. National school that did not experience arson)
>
> Some boys did not know what was going on. But when they saw everyone running and throwing stones just before the fires started, they just joined. You know how boys are…. (*Laughter by all)* (Tony, 18 years, County school that experienced arson

Discussion

In this study, we aimed to explore students' understanding of school arson, their construction of masculinity and the intersection between masculinity and school arson. Our results demonstrate that the students in these focus group discussions were reflectively aware of dominant cultural standards of what it means to be a man. According to Duveen and Lloyd (2013), the development of the social representations of gender provides children with a frame of reference with which to interpret their world (p. 161). The cultural rule system (Duveen & Lloyd, 2013, p.161) prescribes the patterns of behaviour expected of a man and the performances through which masculinity is enacted.

Despite recognising the hegemonic form of masculinity (Buchbinder, 2013, p.94; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.836; Messerschmidt, 2018, p.28) within their cultural context, the students question some of the prescribed "signifiers of masculinity"(Moynihan, 1998, p.1073). The prescribed cultural standard of masculinity seems narrow (Swain, 2006, p.337) and the boys propose their own configuration of masculinity: one in which boys are appreciated with or without academic success, where care and nurture by parents is not considered feminine but which still accommodates culturally prescribed signifiers of masculinity such as their passion for football.

According to Shefer et al. (2007), masculinity does not come naturally but rather it has to be continuously fought for through performances of the idealised patterns of behaviour that define it (p. 3). Herein lies the challenge for school administrators. The demonstration of masculinity constitutes both violent and non-violent behaviour (Fleming et al., 2019, p.209), but these demonstrations of masculinity are influenced by the context. If schools, and schooling, create a threat of humiliation, failure, economic disempowerment, the boys are likely to recoup their masculinity by perpetrating violence (Fleming et al., 2019, p.209) or sabotage (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2018, p.30). Therefore, a school culture that frustrates the performance of masculinity creates a climate that foments violence. A competitive high-stakes testing environment where success is not guaranteed, where students' freedoms are not respected, where students are made to feel powerless and where students' grievances are dismissed as trivial is an 'ideal' environment for violent enactment of masculinity. It is thus likely that school arson, in some instances, was an enactment of masculinity.

The results also indicate an element of "recuperative masculinity" (Foster, Kimmel, & Skelton, 2001, p.5), that is, the view the students hold that any gains for girls in academic success create a disadvantage for the boys or as they said in the interviews "they have taken your place".

It is probable that the perception of better performance by girls is a case of a few girls performing very well and taking top positions in national examinations. With reference to the same claim in the Australian context, (Mills & Lingard, 1997) argue that claims of girls outperforming boys are often a case of "a few middle-class girls challenging the dominance of middle-class boys in high status 'masculinist' subjects such as maths, chemistry and to a lesser extent physics" (p. 278).

Further, they have opined that it is the social construction of hegemonic masculinity that causes boys to over-enrol in these high-status subjects, setting them up for failure (Mills & Lingard, 1997, p.278). This is a probable explanation because limited subject choices for boys (this is also the case in Kenya) limits the opportunities available for boys after school in the event that they do not attain the grade for further education. A review of this practice would probably reduce feelings of frustration among boys.

It is not lost to us that the students expressed frustration at the constant focus on girls and the opportunities available for girls as opposed to boys. The reference they make to how all attention is on 'girl child! girl child! girl child!' suggests an underlying frustration with the international efforts aimed at improving the status of girls and women, especially as captured in the UN's millennium development goals (MDGs) and sustainable development goals (SDGs) since they inform government policies and NGO intervention efforts on improving the status of girls and women. For instance, SDG 5 focusses on gender equality but specifically mentions the uplifting of the lives of girls and women (United Nations, 2014). We understand why there is a need to focus on improving the status of girls and women, but we also put forward a case for the need to pay attention to the unintended consequence of this focus. There is a perception among the boys that this constant focus on girls disadvantages them and leaves them behind. With reference to the South African context, (Ratele, 2016) has argued that when some men perceive a sense of loss of power they may resort to and escalate violence as a way of maintaining the idealised image of manhood (p.17). It is probable that for the students, in the Kenyan context, arson becomes a way both of perpetuating dominant ideas of what it means to be a man and of trying to recoup power.

Though we cannot claim to have any way of stopping future arson, the constructions we have seen here strongly suggest that part of what needs to be dealt with is the perception of relative deprivation in the context of attempting to redress power imbalances. In this respect, the boys' constructions of arson may have something in common with violent masculinities throughout the world where the disempowerment of men in the context of female empowerment is used as an excuse or explanation for violence. We do not have to consider the veracity of the boys' claims, but in order for us to intervene with them we do have to take them seriously.

Conclusion

We conclude and argue that schools continue to act as "masculinity-making devices" (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996, p.59) and that boys' peer groups are some of the most oppressive contexts for the production and regulation of masculinities (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996, p. 54). Therefore, school administrators, and teachers, need to be aware of the nuanced ways in which socially constructed patterns of hegemonic masculinity are in operation within their schools, the constant pressures from peer groups for their students to behave according to group norms (Swain, 2006, p. 334) and the ways in which hegemonic masculinity may disadvantage their students. Besides, there is a need to re-examine the social construction of what it means to be a Kenyan boy, and future man, in a globalised postcolonial context.

This study extends our understanding of the recurrent issue of school arson in Kenya in two ways: first, it provides a platform for the 'insider' view. For a long time, the dominant voice has been the 'outside' view: print media journalists and government officials. Secondly, it moves the discourse away from the usual argument of school arson as a protest against maltreatment and bad living conditions to a new theme: school arson as a performance of masculinity.

However, there is a need for further research to explore how the construction of gender identity influences school arson in girls' secondary schools.

References

Barbour, R. (2007). *Doing focus groups*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology, Vol 2: Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, Neuropsychological, and Biological.*, *2*, 57–71. https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *00*(00), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Buchbinder, D. (2013). *Studying men and masculinities*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2015). Thematic Analysis. In *Analysing qualitative data in Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 85–103). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication Ltd.

Collins, K. M. T. (2010). Advanced sampling designs in mixed research: Current practices and emerging trends in the social and behavioural sciences. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research* (2nd ed., pp. 353–377). Los Angeles: Sage.

Connell, R. . (1995). *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, *19*(6), 829–859. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639

Cooper, E. (2014). Students, arson, and protest politics in Kenya: School fires as political action. *African Affairs*, *113*(453), 583–600. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adu059

Duveen, G., & Lloyd, B. (2013). The significance of social identities. In S. Moscovici, S. Jovchelovitch, & B. Wagoner (Eds.), *Development as a social process: contributions of Gerard Duveen* (pp. 156–172). London: Routledge.

Finley, L. L. (2014). *School violence: a reference handbook* (2nd ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Fleming, P. J., Barrington, C., Maman, S., Lerebours, L., Donastorg, Y., & Brito, M. (2019). Competition and humiliation: how masculine norms shape men's sexual and violent behaviors. *Men and Masculinities*, *22*(2), 197–215. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17715493

Foster, V., Kimmel, M., & Skelton, C. (2001). "What about the Boys?" An overview of the debates. In W. Martino & B. Meyenn (Eds.), *"What about the Boys?" Issues of Masculinity in Schools*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14759390500200428

Haywood, C., & Mac an Ghaill, M. (1996). Schooling masculinities. In M. Mac an Ghaill (Ed.), *Understanding masculinities: social relations and cultural arenas* (pp. 50–60). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research: introducing focus groups. *The BMJ*, *311*, 299–302.

Lindegger, G., & Maxwell, J. (2007). Teenage masculinity: the double bind of conformity and hegemonic standards. In T. Shefer, K. Ratele, S. Anna, N. Shabalala, & R. Buikema (Eds.), *From boys to men: social constructions of masculinity in contemporary society* (pp. 94–111). Lansdowne: UCT Press.

Lungai, E. (2016, December 31). Boys neglected in favour of girls, say school heads. *Standard Media*. Retrieved from https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000228402/boys-neglected-in-favour-of-girls-say-school-heads

Malenya, F. L. (2016). Students, violent protests and the process of self-realization in Kenyan secondary schools. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, *18*(2), 67–82.

Mandel, L., & Shakeshaft, C. (1999). Heterosexism in middle schools. In N. Lesko (Ed.), *Masculinities at school* (pp. 75–103). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Messerschmidt, J. W. (2018). *Hegemonic masculinity: formulation, reformulation and amplification*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Mills, M., & Lingard, B. (1997). Masculinity politics, myths and boys' schooling: a review essay. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *45*(3), 276–292.

Morrell, R. (2019). Vehicle for Southern African knowledge? Men and Masculinities and research from South Africa. *Men and Masculinities*, *22*(1), 34–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X18805548

Moscovici, S. (2001). *Social representations: explorations in social psychology* (G. Duveen, ed.). New York: New York University Press.

Moynihan, C. (1998). Theories of masculinity. *British Medical Journal*, *317*(7165), 1072–1075. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.317.7165.1072

Nieuwenhuis, J. (2007). Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First Steps in Research* (pp. 69–97). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Ratele, K. (2016). *Liberating masculinities*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Romer, D. (2010). Adolescent risk taking, impulsivity, and brain development: Implications for prevention. *Developmental Psychobiology: The Journal of the International Society for Developmental Psychobiology*, *52*(3), 263–276. https://doi.org/10.1002/dev.20442

Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2017). *An introduction to qualitative research: learning in the field* (4TH ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Schrock, D., & Schwalbe, M. (2018). Men, masculinity and manhood acts. In E. W. Morris & F. B. Oeur (Eds.), *Unmasking Masculinities: men and society* (pp. 24–37). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Shefer, T., Ratele, K., Anna, S., Shabalala, N., & Buikema, R. (2007). From boys to men: an overview. In T. Shefer, K. Ratele, A. Strebel, N. Shabalala, & R. Buikema (Eds.), *From boys to men: social constructions of masculinity in contemporary society* (pp. 1–12). Lansdowne: UCT Press.

Swain, J. (2006). Reflections on patterns of masculinity in school settings. *Men and Masculinities*, *8*(3), 331–349. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X05282203

United Nations. (2014). Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, A/68/970: New York

Voelklein, C., & Howarth, C. (2005). A review of controversies about social representations theory: a British debate. *Culture & Psychology*, *11*(4), 431–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X05058586

CHAPTER NINE: MANUSCRIPT 5

School arson in Kenya: Culture, globalisation and the politics of abandonment

9.0 Introducing Manuscript 5

This manuscript explored the theme of abandonment – an unintended consequence of the enactment of the Children's Act. While the Children's Act was intended to protect the child, it seemed to have resulted in the loss of authority and victimisation for the teacher. The teachers seem to have adopted a hands-off approach towards children's misbehaviour while children perceive this as neglect and abandonment. But the discourse, in both the focus group discussions and nationally, has gone beyond the recurrent problem of school arson and raised questions about what it really means to be African? How does a Kenyan navigate the tension between being a member of an ethno-cultural group (that apparently tolerates corporal punishment) and a member of the global community with its attendant institutions and statutes? This discussion is explored further in the manuscript. This paper addresses research questions 2B and 2C. The manuscript has been submitted to the *Social Dynamics* journal for review.

9.1. Manuscript 5

School arson in Kenya: Culture, globalisation and the politics of abandonment

Abstract

School arson, the burning of dormitories in boarding secondary schools in Kenya, is a recurrent problem. Discussions on school fires are often carried out in the print media, and the fires have been a subject of four government taskforce investigations. The dominant views on the causes of school arson are that students are either undisciplined or protesting against a bad schooling experience. Using social representations theory, we conducted an inductive study to explore whether there are other understandings of school arson based on the lived experiences of students. We used extreme case sampling to select four boys' schools and purposive sampling to select 32 teachers and 32 students. Focus group discussions were used to explore teachers' and students' social representations of school arson. A thematic analysis of the interviews revealed that there are other understandings of school arson occasioned by the enactment of the Children's Act. The teachers feel disempowered because of the ban on corporal punishment and adopt a hands-off approach towards students' misbehaviour while students interpret this as neglect and abandonment. These findings suggest that there is need to navigate the tension between international conventions and the reality of cultural contexts in the process of exploring and developing the interface between discourses of child rights and discourses of Kenyan and African identity.

Keywords: Kenya, school arson, abandonment, globalisation, African identity

Introduction

School violence is a global problem that generates much debate. The debate about school violence has increased in intensity since the late 1990s, which sometimes makes it seem like a new phenomenon, but this is not the case (Midlarsky and Klain 2005). Increased media attention to school violence is largely responsible for current attention to school violence (Debarbieux, Blaya, and Vidal 2003). Whether school violence comes in the form of the school shootings in America (Finley 2014) or school stabbings in Japan (Finley 2014), there are always attempts made to understand why it happens, what triggers it and what the solutions to the problem may be. In France, for instance, the issue of school violence has been blamed on the declining authority of the teachers, decay in family values and political weakness (Debarbieux, Blaya, and Vidal 2003).

Context of the article

In Kenya, it is school violence involving arson perpetrated by schoolchildren that attracts considerable media attention. Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in school fires in boarding secondary schools, with some fires resulting in fatalities. So recurrent is the problem that print media journalists have coined the phrase "the second term curse" (Ngwiri 2018) to refer to the problem. The school fires have increased in intensity (Cooper 2014), and they have been a subject of investigation by government taskforces that generated reports. The highest number of school fires was experienced in 2016, which prompted the appointment of a taskforce to conduct an investigation. The unpublished report of the 2016 government taskforce indicated that out of the 429 incidents of school unrest recorded, 219 included school fires (Republic of Kenya 2016). The majority of these schools were boys' secondary schools, and they are the focus of this study. The school fires that happened in 2016 raised more concern than past fires. One of the leading explanations given for the upsurge in school fires, especially in print media discourse, was that

students were becoming increasingly undisciplined because of the enactment of the Children's Act 2001 (Government of Kenya 2001) which outlawed the use of corporal punishment to manage children's misbehaviour. The view was not limited to print media discourse. The transcript below contains a response Kenya's Education Cabinet Secretary (YouTube 2019) gave to journalists in 2019 expressing his views about indiscipline among secondary school students:

> I strongly believe that well-applied corporal punishment will instil discipline in our children. But you see there's a law…there is a law which bars that one so until the law is changed… In fact, I keep asking myself did we change the law in order to follow the external culture or not. But in our culture, it is ok to smack a child responsibly. For me, I had six of the best six times…if I didn't have them, I would have perhaps died as one of those band chaps who are playing guitar. So, I'm talking from my personal experience. As a minister, I cannot make that pronouncement without due process. Do you get the point? And I don't want to be unconstitutional.

In this statement, a government official is drawing a clear distinction between what he views as his mandated, official role, and his personal view as a Kenyan – part of what he terms "our culture" – and this is an issue to which we return later in this article.

The other explanation which has commonly been offered for school arson has been that students are protesting poor living conditions and the boarding school experience and therefore arson becomes a "protest tactic" (Cooper 2014, 595). According to this view, school arson is not just an issue of indiscipline; it is rather a weapon that students use to challenge the status quo and demand a better schooling experience (Cooper 2014, 600).

However, Cooper (2014) further notes that there is need to examine the lived experiences of students and adds that the extent of students' experiences in relation to their "subjectivities remains to be carefully examined" (Cooper 2014, 599). In the same vein, we advance the argument that there may be multiple understandings of school arson and that "indiscipline" and "arson as political action" are some among many understandings of school arson.

Using social representations theory, we conducted an inductive study of students' lived experiences (in focus group discussions with students from selected boys' secondary schools that experienced arson in 2016 and others that did not) to explore other understandings of school arson. In addition, we contrast the students' lived experiences with those of the teachers because teachers directly experience the consequences of students' acts of arson. Further, we posit that school arson in Kenya is a complex issue that is best approached "from a wide range of conceptual and disciplinary angles" (Shapiro 2018, 2).

Social representations theory

Social representations are the way in which a group collectively elaborates a social object for "purposes of behaving and communicating" (Höijer 2011, 3). Social representations "give us a way of making sense of and so constituting socially significant phenomena" (Howarth 2006, 69) and they commonly become visible when a new phenomenon subverts what may have been implicit social rules (Moscovici and Duveen 2000) because they help make an unfamiliar phenomenon familiar" (Wagner and Hayes 2005, 210) or easy to understand (Joffe 2003; Wagner, Farr, Jovchelovitch, and Lorenzi-Cioldi 1999). The twin socio-cognitive processes of anchoring

and objectification provide this study with a useful framework for examining the students' and teachers' lay explanations for school arson (O'Connor 2012). Anchoring categorises new phenomena under familiar concepts in order to make sense of them, while objectification transforms the unfamiliar concepts into familiar concrete experiences (Sarrica and Contarello 2004). For instance, if school arson is framed as an issue of indiscipline, an image of unkempt students in school uniform may be used to concretise this frame. Social representations develop through the media, through conversations, through narratives, among many other forms of social mediation. However, the construction of social representations is not a neutral process. Some groups have a greater chance of asserting their version of reality than others (Jovchelovitch 1996). While the government's view of school arson may be the dominant voice in media reports because of ease of access to the media, the voice of the students and teachers may be unheard due to lack of access. Social representations theory provides a means through which we can examine how individuals within social groups make sense of the world around them and how these understandings change, develop and interact (Flick, Foster, and Caillaud 2015).

Crucially, social representations theory allows for competing, even contradictory, meanings of reality to exist in the same community, culture and individual (Lincoln and Guba 2013; Moscovici 2001; Voelklein and Howarth 2005). We use the concept of "polyphasia" (Moscovici and Duveen 2000, 245) to interrogate the different understandings of school arson that exist among students and teachers. The concept makes it possible to find out whether school arson is just an issue of protest and indiscipline or whether there are other understandings of school arson.

Investigating social representations of school arson

Sample

We used purposive sampling (Creswell 2009) to select the schools involved in the study since it allowed us to focus on the characteristics of the population that were of interest to the study (Nieuwenhuis 2007) and also allowed for participants to be selected based on the research questions posed (Bryman 2012). Two types of purposive sampling were used: typical case and extreme case sampling. Typical sampling (Collins 2010) was applied to select typical boys' secondary schools in Kenya that had experienced school arson with the aim of comparing the research findings from such a school to similar schools.

In the second stage, extreme case sampling was used to select the specific schools included in the study. Extreme case sampling is used when the sample represents the phenomenon under study in an unusual way (Bryman 2012). In the school fires that happened in 2016, two schools drew more attention than the rest. In the first case, a school fire happened in a national school which is a type of school that does not ordinarily experience school arson (Aduda 2016). Secondly, one school (a county school) had a record eight dormitories set on fire in one night. Both schools were boys' schools. The two schools were included in the sample, but for comparison purposes and to increase the sample size two schools of equal status that did not experience incidents of arson were also included. There were two national schools and two county schools in the final sample. A national school admits top students from across the country while a county school admits "B" students from across the country but reserves about twenty percent of the vacancies for students from within the county.

The sample was further stratified before the final selection of focus group participants. Only students who were already enrolled in their respective schools in 2016 were included in the sample. The participants were drawn from the current Form 3 and Form 4 students (Secondary school in Kenya lasts for four years and comprises Forms 1, 2, 3 and 4) as at the time of collecting data in 2018. These particular students were in Form 1 and Form 2 in 2016, when the school fires happened. The age range for these participants was between 15–18 years old. The teaching staff were divided into two groups: male and female before a sample of eight teachers (four male and four female) was drawn purposively from each school. A total of 32 students and 32 teachers participated in the focus group discussions (eight participants per group and one group per school).

Focus groups

Focus group discussions were conducted with the students and teachers to explore their understanding of school arson, with specific reference to the school arson incidents reported in 2016. The discussions were guided by ten semi-structured interview questions (Bryman 2012). Focus groups were ideal for this study because they allow for different perspectives and experiences to be revealed as participants interact (Morgan and Hoffman 2018). Participants become co-constructors of meaning as their views contribute towards the construction of a cohesive picture of the phenomenon under study (Goebert 2002). Since focus group discussions allow for multiple perspectives to be revealed, they fitted in well with the aim of this study which was to explore whether there are other understandings of school arson. Secondly, the method relies on interaction, and it is this interaction that allows the researcher to use participants' discussions to produce data that would otherwise be inaccessible without interaction (Morgan 2019).

Permission to access the schools and conduct the focus groups discussions was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Kenya. Further permission was sought from the respective County Directors and Sub-County Directors of education depending on the location of the school. Access to the schools was provided by the headteachers. The first author interacted with the students and teachers and explained the nature of the study before selecting key informants. The key informants of the first sample included student leaders, prefects, class leaders and ordinary members of the student body. The second sample consisted of four female teachers and four male teachers with varied subject area expertise and with varied levels of teaching experience. The participants (students) were given consent forms for minors and parental consent forms. The teachers signed informed consent forms. The forms were administered between September and October 2017. The focus group discussions were conducted between January and early March 2018. The discussions were held in the school libraries or school boardrooms depending on availability. The discussions were audio-recorded, and they lasted an average of two and a half hours. The longest discussion lasted three hours, five minutes. The tapescripts were transcribed in March 2018.

Ethical considerations

All participants signed informed consent forms. Ethics permission to conduct the study was obtained through University XXX, Ethics number YYYY.

Data analysis

We transcribed the audio recordings verbatim. The first author read the transcripts repeatedly to become familiar with the data, to check for transcription accuracy and to anonymise the

participants' identity. The transcripts were then uploaded onto ATLAS.ti v.8 for coding. In ATLAS.ti, the focus group transcripts were sorted and grouped according to the type of school (national or county) and according to whether the school had experienced arson in 2016 or not (arson vs non-arson schools).

The data were analysed inductively using thematic analysis, a creative and theoretically flexible method of organising, describing and interpreting qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2013; Clarke and Braun 2015). Because of its flexibility, thematic analysis can be paired with most data collection approaches and this makes it a good "all-purpose" strategy for analysing focus groups (Morgan and Hoffman 2018, 259).

In ATLAS.ti, the transcripts underwent two cycles of coding. The first cycle generated initial codes using words and phrases drawn directly from the data (Saldana 2009, 2015) and the researchers' interpretation of the data. The second cycle of coding involved checking for duplicated/overlapping codes and merging or deleting them (Braun and Clarke 2012).

The final list of codes was used to create groups that were later merged into sub-themes (Braun and Clarke 2017; Nowell 2017). For instance, groups such as "no one listens", "uncaring teachers" and "unavailable teachers" were grouped under the sub-theme "need for teachers' attention".

A further review of the sub-themes helped identify "tentative and temporary" candidate themes (Terry 2015) such as "listen to us", "generation gap", and "we fear our students" among others. The themes were further reviewed and smaller repetitive themes were combined while other

themes were renamed to determine whether the resulting themes meaningfully captured the entire data set (Braun and Clarke 2012). The final review of the candidate themes helped construct two central themes that meaningfully represented the views of the students and teachers on school arson: *a cry for attention* and *teacher victimization*.

Results

The analysis of the focus group discussions revealed that while school arson may be a result of teenage indiscipline or an act of protest against maltreatment, poor living conditions and school mismanagement, there are two other underlying psychological issues that, according to our participants, make school arson more probable: *a cry for attention* and *teacher victimization*. We will discuss the two themes in depth below.

A cry for attention

During the focus group discussions, the students alluded to the fact that school fires were a result of feeling abandoned and the need to be heard by teachers, as expressed by the respondents quoted below:

> I think the major cause of fires is attention. […] burning of schools always happens […] if you go deep looking for the stories, they would be looking for that attention. Either from the parents or the teachers or from somebody. (Jack, 17 years old, focus group participant in a non-arson school)

> Because now in an institution where students are not listened to, they are weak, they do not have a voice. The teachers don't seem to care. They just teach and go away. And so, how

> do they get their attention? They do something big. (Luke, 17 years old, focus group participant in a school that experienced arson)

> In school, we have no power here. You know there are some teachers, as we said, some do not want to reason. They may have their own problems and never, as long as they have taught and done their part, they don't want anything – they don't want to hear anything else. So, what do you do when nobody wants to hear you? You have been pushed to a cage somewhere, how do you hope for their attention? (Curtis, 18 years old, focus group participant in a school that experienced arson)

The students seem reflectively aware of the disconnect between their needs and the demands placed on them by adults (teachers and parents). According to the students, it is this disconnect that leads to the neglect of their needs and brings about frustration that makes acts of violence more likely. The teachers, for instance, place more emphasis on good grades at the expense of life skills, as illustrated in the quotations below:

> RESPONDENT: So, there is overemphasis, you need to pass, you need to get grades but there's still life.
>
> INTERVIEWER: There's life?
>
> RESPONDENT: There's life to be lived, it's not all about academics. After all, even if I fail, that is not the end of my life. I still have a life to live. And education will not do much good to me, giving me papers without giving me the way to handle those papers. (Simon, 18 years, focus group participant in a non-arson school)

INTERVIEWER: You are saying we the adults are putting pressure on you to excel, but we haven't equipped you with skills on how to handle the pressure?

RESPONDENT: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: That's something you would want your teachers to know?

RESPONDENT: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Don't put pressure without giving me the skills to handle the pressure?

RESPONDENT: Yes. (Oliver, 16 years, focus group participant in a non-arson school)

The students also suggested solutions to the problem of school fires, which included a call to teachers to listen to them and pay attention to their needs, as illustrated in the quotations below:

RESPONDENT: According to me, if the needs of the students are taken into consideration, maybe the burning of schools would have been avoided. (Simon, 18 years old, focus group participant in a school that experienced arson)

RESPONDENT: So, I would ask you to go, when you go to the institutions, at least to advise or you tell the administration to devise a way to speak to the students on a personal level. (Oliver, 16 years old, focus group participant in a school that experienced arson)

According to the students, the disconnect between students and teachers may be a result of a generation/knowledge gap. Teachers may be unaware of the level of exposure that students have or of the transformative power of the knowledge that students are able to access and may be dismissive of the issues that students raise:

> We have been exposed, it's not like the other centuries. This is a century where everything is out there. And so, once I have information, I think I am bright enough to give my own ideas. Now when I am denied the chance to give my ideas, I tend to think okay, so why did you even give me this information in the first place? You get frustrated and think let me do something big so that you can listen to my ideas. (Manuel, 17 years, focus group participant in a non-arson school)

Teacher victimisation

Teachers' views differed markedly from the students' views. In a way, the teachers are at a loss: what the students call "neglect" or "the feeling of abandonment" teachers call a loss of power, mainly occasioned by the ban on corporal punishment and the ineffectiveness of guidance and counselling as an alternative to corporal punishment, as revealed in the quotation below:

> I want to say that our guidance and counselling department is actually very strong here. And we meet these students every Monday and we talk to them, and they are also allowed to see the teacher and the other members of that department on a one on one basis. But, it's like you just talk. They have allowed us to talk. It's like we talk to ourselves, not them. (Ann, teacher in a school that experienced arson)

According to the teachers, students have been empowered to the extent of openly disrespecting teachers, taunting them, calling them names and sometimes physically assaulting them. Therefore, instead of getting traumatised further, they have left children to their own devices by restricting themselves to teaching and ignoring social/emotional development of the children:

> RESPONDENT 1: Yeah. Although it is traumatising to those who were there (students who were in the school during the 2016 school fire), they may forget the

> trauma but at least they feel good that they are free from those rules and the strict environment is now easy on them. There is no caning, there is no being pushed around so much because the teachers and the administration fear that they will burn the school; so, the students must be thinking 'they have left us free'. I think they are enjoying it. That's the major change that you can say is there. The boys are happy they are enjoying their freedom.

INTERVIEWER: Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

RESPONDENT 1: It's a bad thing. Very bad.

RESPONDENT 2: It is a bad thing.

INTERVIEWER: It's a bad thing, yeah?

RESPONDENT 2: Now, they are feeling heroic. In fact, it has given them this notion that 'we can ask for anything we want and we can do anything we feel like'. They have become more disrespectful. (Jennifer and Sam, teachers in a school that experienced arson)

The responses suggest that teachers are afraid of their students, and they, therefore, have to tread carefully when handling them lest they get angry and burn school buildings:

RESPONDENT: We fear, anything can trigger them to start a fire. We fear for our lives. Actually, they complained about being subjected to a lot of work for a long time. So initially they would sleep at 10 p.m., but nowadays they go to sleep at 9:30 p.m. So, we reduced the hours according to their wishes. (John, teacher in a school that experienced arson)

RESPONDENT: And even the demands they are giving, you are also afraid that one day they will wake up and say we don't want to be in school or we are tired of school or we don't want exams. (Lucy, teacher in a non-arson school)

The teachers too allude to the disconnect or a "generation gap" between them and their students which may have contributed further to the deteriorating relations between teachers and students:

RESPONDENT: Okay, maybe for you as a psychologist, maybe you could help us to know how to bridge this gap now. You know after the fire it is like we are two different parties. The students are a party and the teachers are another party. There is that disconnect. (Nancy, teacher at a school that experienced arson)

RESPONDENT: Being a teacher in the modern society actually is a big challenge because as much as we have a responsibility to disseminate knowledge to this generation, the kids of this generation, we really do our best to give the knowledge as in the books. And there is also this other one which is silent, to bring them up morally, to teach the right thing. But you find that now, the generation gap between the teachers and the modern child. (Chengo, teacher at a school that experienced arson)

The students' resistance towards strict rules and desire for unfettered freedom has affected the quality of teaching according to the teachers:

RESPONDENT: Yeah, they want to be free to do what they want. So, they will resist, and then you will find there is a lot of confrontation. That makes teaching them hard. (Justus, teacher in a non-arson school)

The overall view, according to the teachers, is that students have become more and more disrespectful to the teachers to the point of openly taunting their teachers, as illustrated in the quote below:

RESPONDENT: In fact, the students tell you *'Chunga mshahara yako'* (Guard your salary). Meaning you touch me; you will be sacked. (Michael, teacher in a non-arson school)

Discussion

The aims of this study were to find out whether there were other understandings of school arson. The results reveal that pupils believe that school arson may be a cry for attention. The cry for attention is a result of feelings of abandonment by students, occasioned by the teachers' hands-off approach to managing students' behaviour. When teachers yield to students' demands and "forfeit their own adulthood", it leads to tyranny and fear (Barcai and Rosenthal 1974, 395). The teachers fear the students and cannot rein them in whereas students take advantage and tyrannise the teachers. But the tyranny is seemingly a result of a deep-seated need by the students to be heard.

This finding is consistent with social representations theory (Moscovici 1984). The lack of consensual agreement about school arson, despite teachers and students sharing common points of reference, implies shared knowledge (Clémence 2001). According to Howarth, Foster, and Dorrer

(2004, 234), "social representations theory acknowledges multiple and dynamic knowledge systems about any socially significant object" therefore different groups can hold different social representations including opposing representations (Moscovici 1984) in the same representational field.

The success of schools as socialising agents is, to a large extent, dependent on the relationship between teachers and students. DiGiulio (2001) has argued that teachers are the linchpins in this socialisation process because they are the closest to the students and are the most likely to make a difference in a student's life than any other professional. But teachers who fear their own students and who feel that their authority has been undermined (through the enactment of laws which emphasise child rights) would hardly facilitate the socialisation process effectively. DiGiulio (2001) has further argued that there is need to empower teachers not because they must control students but so that they can create a safe school environment and facilitate a move away from violent behaviour. This role cannot be played by disempowered, intimidated, passive teachers who have adopted a hands-off approach towards students' misbehaviour.

The practical challenge for school administrators and government is to focus on programmes that create a better school climate that helps learners learn and feel appreciated, that does not undermine the authority of the teacher and which makes school protests that involve destructive actions such as arson less likely.

Conclusion

An unintended consequence of the enactment of the Children's Act 2001 is that it made teachers adopt a hands-off approach towards students' misbehaviour. Students, on the other hand, interpret this as abandonment and therefore resort to extreme violent actions to attract the teachers' attention. It may be ironical that, before the enactment of the Children's Act (Government of Kenya 2001), the teachers' authority was tied to the use of corporal punishment. Regrettably, it seems that the students are aware of this fact and have realised that they can wilfully challenge the teachers' authority and engage in disruptive behaviour because there is no threat of corporal punishment.

The underlying issue in the debate on the enactment of the Children's Act (Government of Kenya 2001) may relate to a belief that in the Kenyan culture it is not wrong to use corporal punishment, as captured in the words of the Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Education as noted earlier. This brings to the fore the global debate on human rights and cultural relativism (White 1999). The reluctance to fully embrace the Children's Act in the Kenyan context is reminiscent of the debate on whether children's rights, alongside human rights, can be fully embraced in non-Western cultures. The Children's Rights Convention (United Nations 1989) has been criticised for representing "a Western, capitalistic Judeo-Christian perspective" (Hall 2013, 10) and is therefore possibly not relevant to other cultures. The discourse on the search for a solution to the problem of school arson seems intertwined with the search for a Kenyan identity in the postcolonial context. The question of how to navigate the tension between international conventions and the reality of the Kenyan cultural context remains unsolved.

We do not wish to suggest the child rights are unimportant – far from it. But the experiences of the teachers and pupils we spoke with highlight a broader and much more problematic phenomenon. As we noted early in this article, even a cabinet secretary, speaking on the record to reporters in 2019, argued that some aspects of the law of the land in Kenya are cultural impositions from the outside, and in conflict with the practices of people who identify as true Kenyans. This raises fundamental questions about the global political and fiscal context within which laws are enacted in a lower middle-income country dependent to some degree on foreign aid. This is a broad political question. But our data suggest that this global political question may have profound local consequences, and may contribute to a crisis around questions of appropriate and legitimate authority in schools. The compromises Kenya may make as a country wishing to benefit from an approved status in a globalised world are political compromises, but if these compromises are not fully explored and considered, they may have consequences for local experiences, including, as our data suggest, in the education system. It is clear that much more work needs to be done in the process of exploring and developing the interface between discourses of child rights and discourses of Kenyan and African identity, because the current lack of fit between these has powerful local consequences.

Funding details

This work was supported by funding from the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Declaration of interest statement

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Aduda, David. 2016. "Refusal by Principals to Assist in KCSE Cheating among the Causes of Violence." *Daily Nation*, July 24. https://mobile.nation.co.ke/news/reluctance-to-abet-cheating-in-KCSE-among-the-causes-of-violence/1950946-3308120-item-1-3akmra/index.html.

Barcai, Avner, and Miriam K. Rosenthal. 1974. "Fears and Tyranny: Observations on the Tyrannical Child." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 30: 392–395.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2012. "Thematic Analysis." In *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology, Vol 2: Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, Neuropsychological, and Biological,* edited by Harris Cooper, Paul M. Camic, Debra L. Long, A. T. Panter, David Rindskopf, and Kenneth J. Sher, 57–71. Washington: American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2013. *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. 1st ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Bryman, Alan. 2012. *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Clarke, Victoria, and Virginia Braun. 2015. "Thematic Analysis." In *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology,* 2nd ed., edited by Evanthia Lyons, and Adrian Coyle, 85–103. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication Ltd.

Clémence, Alain. 2001. "Social Positioning and Social Representations." In *Representations of the Social: Bridging Theoretical Traditions*, edited by Kay Deaux, and Gina Philogène, 83–95. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Collins, Kathleen M. T. 2010. "Advanced Sampling Designs in Mixed Research: Current Practices and Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioural Sciences." In *Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*, 2nd ed., edited by Abbas Tashakkori, and Charles Teddlie, 353–377. Los Angeles: Sage.

Cooper, Elizabeth. 2014. "Students, Arson, and Protest Politics in Kenya: School Fires as Political Action." *African Affairs* 113 (453): 583–600. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adu059

Creswell, John W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/978-1-4129-6556-9

Debarbieux, Eric, Catherine Blaya, and Daniel Vidal. 2003. "Tackling Violence in Schools: A Report from France." In *Violence in Schools: The Response in Europe*, edited by Peter K. Smith, 17–32. London: Routledge Falmer.

DiGiulio, Robert C. 2001. *Educate, Medicate or Litigate? What Teachers, Parents, and Administrators Must Do about Student Behavior*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Finley, Laura L. 2014. *School Violence: A Reference Handbook*. Contemporary World Issues.

Flick, Uwe, Juliet Foster, and Sabine Caillaud. 2015. "Researching Social Representations." In *The Cambridge Handbook of Social Representations*, edited by Gordon Sammut, Eleni Andreouli, George Gaskell, and Jaan Valsiner, 64–80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goebert, Henna. *Beyond Listening: Learning the Secret Language of Focus Groups*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Government of Kenya. 2001. "The Children's Act 2001." In *The Kenya Gazette Supplement, No. 95, Acts No. 8*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Hall, Julia. 2013. "Introduction: School Children in Serious Need of Rights." In *Children's Human Rights and Public Schooling in the United States*, edited by Julia Hall, 1–16. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Höijer, Birgitta. 2011. "Social Representations Theory: A New Theory for Media Research." *Nordicom Review* 32 (2): 3–16.

Howarth, Caroline. 2006. "A Social Representation Is Not a Quiet Thing: Exploring the Critical Potential of Social Representations Theory." *The British Journal of Social Psychology / the British Psychological Society* 45: 65–86. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605X43777

Howarth, Caroline, Juliet Foster, and Nike Dorrer. 2004. "Exploring the Potential of the Theory of Social Representations in Community-Based Health Research - and Vice Versa?" *Journal of Health Psychology* 9 (2): 229–245. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105304040889.

Joffe, Helene. 2003. "Risk: From Perception to Social Representation." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 42: 55–73.

Jovchelovitch, Sandra. 1996. "In Defence of Representations." *Journal of the Theory of Social Behaviour* 26 (2): 121–135.

Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba. 2013. *The Constructionist Credo*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Midlarsky, Elizabeth, and Helen Marie Klain. 2005. "A History of Violence in the Schools." In *Violence in Schools: Cross-National and Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Florence

Denmark, Uwe Gielen, Herbert H. Krauss, Elizabeth Midlarsky, and Helen Marie Klain, 37–57. New York, NY: Springer Science + Business Media, Inc.

Morgan, David L., and Kim Hoffman. 2018. "Focus Groups." In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*, edited by Uwe Flick, 250–263. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Moscovici, Serge. 1984. "The Phenomenon of Social Representations." In *Social Representations*, edited by R. Farr, and S. Moscovici, 3–69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moscovici, Serge. 2001. *Social Representations: Explorations in Social Psychology*, edited by Gerard Duveen, 245–246. New York: New York University Press.

Moscovici, Serge, and Gerard Duveen. 2000. "The Phenomenon of Social Representations." In *Social Representations: Explorations in Social Psychology*, edited by Serge Moscovici and Gerard Duveen, 18–77. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ngwiri, Magesha. 2018. "The Second Term Curse Has Struck, Let's Save Our Schools." *Daily Nation*, July 7. https://www.nation.co.ke/oped/opinion/second-term-curse-has-struck-schools/440808-4650170-h5ubbu/index.html.

Nieuwenhuis, Jan. 2007. "Qualitative Research Designs and Data Gathering Techniques." In *First Steps in Research*, edited by Kobus Maree, 69–97. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Nowell, Lorelli S., Jill M. Norris, and Deborah E. White. 2017. "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16: 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

O'Connor, Cliodha. 2012. "Using Social Representations Theory to Examine Lay Explanation of Contemporary Social Crises: The Case of Ireland's Recession." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 22: 453–469. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp

Republic of Kenya. 2016. "The Report of the Special Investigations Team on School Unrest." Claire Omolo Report (Unpublished Report).

Saldana, Johnny. 2009. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Saldana, Johnny. 2015. *Thinking Qualitatively: Methods of the Mind*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Sarrica, Mauro, and Allberta Contarello. 2004. "Peace, War and Conflict: Social Representations Shared by Peace Activists and Non-Activists." *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (5): 549–568.

Shapiro, Harvey. 2018. "Introduction: Context, Form, Prevention, and Response: A Multidisciplinary Approach." In *The Wiley Handbook on Violence in Education: Forms, Factors, and Preventions*, edited by Harvey Shapiro, 1–6. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Terry, Gareth. 2015. "Doing Thematic Analysis." In *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology*, 2nd ed., edited by Evanthia Lyons and Adrian Coyle, 104–118. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

United Nations. 1989. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

Voelklein, Corina, and Caroline Howarth. 2005. "A Review of Controversies about Social Representations Theory: A British Debate." *Culture & Psychology* 11 (4): 431–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X05058586

Wagner, Wolfgang, and Nicky Hayes. 2005. *Everyday Discourse and Common Sense: The Theory of Social Representation*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wagner, Wolfgang, Robert Farr, Sandra Jovchelovitch, and Fabio Lorenzi-Cioldi. 1999. "Theory and Method of Social Representations." *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2: 95–125.

White, Ben. 1999. "Defining the Intolerable: Child Work, Global Standards and Cultural Relativism." *Childhood* 6 (1): 133–144. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c974/74517dc905ff70a0432114ec5d90d77c2814.pdf

YouTube. (2019, July 28). "Magoha Forced to Clarify Advocating for Caning of Students." https://youtu.be/IXUKRQ2PCkY

PART 4: CONCLUDING THE STUDY

In this part of the thesis, I present my reflections on the PhD research journey. I also present a synthesis of the findings across data sets and tie together the different understandings of school arson in Kenya. I also discuss the implications of the findings. This study has not only provided insights into the recurrent phenomenon of school arson, but it has also raised questions and created potential opportunities for future research. Therefore, I will also discuss possibilities of future research and next steps beyond this dissertation. This section comprises two chapters:

i. Chapter Ten: Research experiences and self-reflection

ii. Chapter Eleven: Concluding the study

CHAPTER 10: RESEARCH EXPERIENCES AND SELF-REFLECTION

10.0 Introduction

When I started this study, I was very sceptical about how I would really study school arson without administering psychological tests, performing parametric and non-parametric tests, checking reliability and validity, conduct logistic regression and factor analyses if need before I could draw conclusions! I was coming from a very strong quantitative training background and had been teaching basic and advanced statistics for almost seven years. However, a reality check from my supervisors made me realise if I was interested in understanding the phenomenon of school arson, then my study would certainly be qualitative. Thus, began a journey of learning and more learning. A very steep learning curve I must admit. My main concern of course was how to make sure I was an 'objective' researcher. My concern was quickly resolved as I read about the craft of qualitative research to clarify my ontological and epistemological stances (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2019, pp.62-63) during the research design phase. I came across the concept of reflexivity. I realised that reflexivity in qualitative research is not a problem but an opportunity (Finlay, 2002; p.531; Subramani, 2019, p.1). It allows researchers to turn a critical gaze towards themselves (Finlay, 2003, p.3) and, according to Patton (1999), "to be attentive and conscious of the cultural, political, linguistic, and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports" (p.65). In this chapter, I will reflect on how my identity as a researcher, parent and educationist as well as my personal beliefs, my knowledge of the socio-political context within which the school fires happened and my construction of meaning influenced my interaction with the research participants and how I analysed the data.

Discussion with my supervisors helped me become aware of the situated nature of qualitative research, more reflective about my observations and to realise that reflexivity

would be an ongoing process. Since I could not eliminate myself from the data, I monitored my influence on the research process and on my preliminary interpretations of the data. I started keeping a diary of the fieldwork process. I recorded my feelings, my observations of my participants, my interactions with the participants and especially the goings-on in the socio-political context within the school fires happened, the national discourse on print media, radio and social media that followed any reports of new school fires and my changing perspectives as I interacted with students, teachers and parents. I documented how my thinking grew and how my understanding of school arson became more and more refined. The "reflexive moments" (Subramani, 2019, p.2) that I present in this section draw heavily on the diary that I kept. Subramani (2019) has defined "reflexive moments" as "the significant experiences and reflections at certain stages of the research that help the researcher reconstruct the research journey in a better way" (p.2).

10.1. Research question, the socio-political context and the personal converged

The year I started my PhD studies, 2017, was also an election year in Kenya. The general elections were held in August of the same year, but the presidential results were contested. The disputed results led to the nullification of the presidential election by the Supreme Court. Inevitably, the election had to be repeated in October 2017. Schools in Kenya serve as polling stations and a repeated election meant that the school calendar had to be adjusted. In addition, there were violent demonstrations which sometimes affected my ability to travel to research sites. This forced me to adjust my fieldwork schedule. The presidential election was nullified on the 1st of September, 2017. On the morning of 2nd September 2017, I woke up to the news that a girls' school had experienced arson and that there had been fatalities and some students were admitted with serious injuries. It was not just a girls' school. It was my little niece's school. This was one of the lowest moments in this

PhD journey. What are the odds of studying school fires and getting directly affected by one? I finally received the news that my niece was well but traumatized.

I followed the discussions in both local and international print media, on social media and on TV news. The pattern of reactions was predictable: strong condemnations of government reports gathering dust, tough ministerial statements, and vitriol towards a spoilt generation of children, among others. Then the discussions died after a month. This particular fire forced me to reflect on my research design. I wondered whether I should have included girls' schools. These reflections have had an impact on me and contributed to the way I have engaged with the data, the recommendations I will make and my next research project: understanding the social representations of school arson in girls' schools that have experienced arson. I made a promise to my niece.

10.2. Sampling and the lessons learnt

The focus group discussions were conducted in four boys' secondary schools. Two had experienced school arson, and two had not. One of the reasons the non-arson schools were selected was because they were of comparable status to the ones that experienced arson. I also had a pre-conceived assumption that since they were of equal status, there must be something in the non-arson schools that makes school arson unlikely. During the focus discussions, I did pose questions that were aimed at establishing the differences between the schools that experienced arson and those that did not.

On the evening of 10th July 2018 (about five months after completing fieldwork), I received a message from one of the teachers who was a participant in the focus group discussions. A dormitory had been set on fire in the school I had referred to as my 'model school' in our casual discussions. I had shared with him my belief that the school seemed to have a better culture of communication between students and teachers which I suggested probably explained why it did not experience a school fire in 2016 despite their location. The

school was surrounded by schools that had experienced arson in 2016. The 2018 school fire made me reflect and re-examine my interpretations of data. I became more open-minded as I analysed the data after realising that the phenomenon, I was studying was more complex than I had anticipated. This school fire re-directed my analysis. I allowed the data to lead me and revised many of my assumptions.

This fire also made me reflect and wonder why the teachers in this school were confident that their students would not set their school on fire. They were confident that their students loved their school, unlike students in schools that experienced arson. I have reflected deeply on whether my research design could have been improved by adding a quantitative element to capture the school climate and teachers' sense of self-efficacy. It seems there may be other factors at play that teachers, in this specific school, that teachers are unaware of. As I reflected on this particular case of school arson – an example of epistemological reflexivity (Corlett & Mavin, 2018, p.379) – I was left wondering whether designing the study differently could have detected signs that there was a possibility of a school fire happening and warn the teachers of that possibility.

10.3. Which hat suits me best? Self-reflections on researcher positionality

In this PhD research journey, I have constantly wondered which identity to adopt when engaging with my participants and in the interpretation of the data. Parent? Psychologist/Researcher? Educator? Female researcher interviewing male students, male teachers and parents? A Kenyan and therefore an insider in terms of the social construction of the school arson phenomenon? Although I had adopted the view that the social representations of school arson would be co-constructed with my research participants, I began to become aware of my privileged position as a researcher when all my participants, younger and older would not address me by my first name though I had requested that they do so. I was referred to as 'madam' throughout and in all research sites. Being Kenyan, I

understood the implied meaning. I would be conducting the focus group discussions from a privileged position. My practical challenge was to get my participants to understand that they had more information about school arson than I did.

Despite my view of my participants, I was still aware that as a researcher I was a central figure in the research process as I actively constructed the collection, selection and interpretation of data (Finlay, 2003, p.5). I acknowledged the ways in which my experiences, belief systems, political leanings and social identities would shape my research (Palaganas, Sanchez, Caricativo, & Molintas, 2017, p.430). For instance, because of the recurrent nature of school arson, my participants and I were influenced in our discussions by the current newspaper reports. Sometimes, these discussions would start long before I formally started recording the discussions and before all participants had arrived. In such cases, I took detailed notes of my participants' discussions and sometimes formulated more informed interview questions. Navigating through my various identities helped me adjust my views and pre-conceived understandings. The focus group discussions sometimes put me in a difficult position, especially when I had to arbitrate between male and female participants on their views on what it means to be a man in the Kenyan context. It was difficult navigating these kinds of heated arguments while suppressing my own views. I did not want to influence the direction the discussion took by taking sides. I had to use very safe types of questions to draw out responses and keep the discussions going. Being an 'insider' helped because I was able to draw upon cultural assumptions on appropriate rules of conversation especially among men and women. In focus groups with students, I was tempted many times to correct what I considered 'erroneous' views about masculinity. However, I had to constantly remind myself to wear the correct 'hat' of a co-constructor of understandings who facilitates turn taking to allow for understandings to be expressed.

I also learnt to become more empathetic towards my participants. For instance, there was a conflict between my personal view towards the use of corporal punishment to manage children's behaviour and the views of parents and teachers. But then I looked back at my own management of children's misbehaviour. Sometimes I have managed my children's misbehaviour by drawing on my knowledge as a psychologist. I reflected many times on such experiences and asked myself what I would have done in such a situation if I were a parent without any training in psychology. This was one of the moments when I realised that my understandings prior to the fieldwork were coloured by access to privileged information. In another focus group discussion with students I realised that I did not fully appreciate the concept of burnout as understood by students. I had never woken up at 4am to attend class or take a test while in secondary school. It is through these discussions that I realised why children would constantly complain about a bad school experience and probably set a dormitory on fire to create an opportunity to go home. As I conclude the study, I can, from a position of knowledge and wearing the parent 'hat', argue out a case for a more child-friendly school schedule that does not require children to start learning from 4am and retire to bed past 10pm. I am also more empathetic towards the teachers and understand their frustration at lack of support from both parents and the general public. Many of the recommendations I make in the concluding chapter will be strongly influenced by my position as a psychologist and teacher trainer and my strong belief that teachers and schools provide the best means of positively influencing children's behaviour, training children to manage their own behaviour, creating safe school climates and find solutions towards the recurrent problem of school arson.

10.4. The researcher-researched relationship after fieldwork

I have been able to remain in touch with my participants (parents and teachers) and contact persons at the two media houses where I collected data. Although sometimes I have

been overwhelmed by inquiries on whether I have arrived at a "solution' for the problem of school arson, I have appreciated the frequent updates on new cases of school arson. I have benefitted greatly from this post-fieldwork relationship because I would clarify issues that were unclear, especially during the data analysis stage. For instance, I requested one teacher to read through a transcript to confirm if I got the content right. I realised that what was reported in local and international media differed from what the teachers had said. The relationship with my participants, especially the teachers, has been mutually beneficial. While they can consult and have discussions with me on student misbehaviour, I have benefitted through fact-checking on the data. This process of respondent validation (Whitley & Crawford, 2005, p.2) has added rigour into my study.

10.5. 'Eating an elephant one bite at a time': The Publication experiences

I chose to adopt the thesis by publication format because of the obvious advantages. For instance, as a researcher returning to a full-time university teaching position, the PhD by publication afforded me an opportunity to publish, since publications are a key component of professional growth. However, this decision came with some challenges. Part of my research journey was learning how to navigate through these challenges. The main challenge in this study was working with four sets of data. The amount of data was massive; therefore, I had to break down the data into smaller units first and write an article for each data set or multiple articles (for focus group discussions). While this provided a systematic way to analyse and understand the data bit by bit, it also meant using different referencing and formatting systems for each manuscript. This also meant that sometimes I had to re-format an article if I needed to submit it to a different journal. I did get discouraged sometimes because I felt that the work was not progressing as fast as I wanted it to. There was also the constant need to consider the role and aims of each paper and its contribution to overall coherence of the thesis

(Mason & Merga, 2018, p.1456). This concern sometimes slowed down the writing process especially in the early stages when I had not connected the dots.

The thesis by publication comes with the challenge of going through the peer-review process. The peer-review process is beneficial in the sense that it provides feedback beyond your supervisors' feedback lending more credibility to your work. The feedback, has sometimes been confusing and discouraging but through my supervisors' expert guidance, I have learnt how to engage with journals right from submission to acceptance. I gained from the review process, even when it involved transferring an article to another journal. External review improved the thesis and exposed me to a critical skill for any academic: dealing with "in-depth critical feedback from … expert sources" (Merga, 2015, p.300) constructively.

10.6. The research experience in summary

My PhD research experience can be summarised in one word: eventful, but with ample opportunities for growth. This is a study that was affected by the nullification of a presidential election, a school fire that personally affected me, and another one that challenged my pre-conceived assumptions about which schools experience arson and which do not, and which has left on speed dial with journalists and teachers wondering whether I have a solution for school arson. I had to constantly navigate through these events and remain focused on the main aim of the study but still remain reflectively aware of how my personal characteristics were influencing my positionality and consequently, the decisions I was making. My position as a psychologist and educationist greatly influenced how my participants related to me. The teachers sought guidance on behaviour management while the parents considered me one of them who understood the challenges they had with their children. In the course of the focus group discussions some things were implied and not explicitly stated because I would understand. I was one of them. The students, on the other

hand, were looking for an ally who would make their views known to their teachers and parents.

Being Kenyan and attuned to the national discourse on school arson helped me frame my interview questions in a more knowledgeable way. My knowledge of psychology influenced how I interpreted the data but it was also a challenge because I had to work hard not to correct any views expressed that contradicted what is considered best practice in behaviour modification.

The research period has also been a period of growth (Palaganas, Sanchez, Caricativo, & Molintas, 2017, p.426). In terms of personal growth, I have become a more empathetic parent. I have become more aware of the challenges teenagers face as they try to construct their identity in a country struggling to find its own identity in a postcolonial context. I am now more empathetic towards the challenges teachers and parents face in the current Kenyan context. This growth will influence how I design the syllabus for student teachers. Lastly, undertaking a PhD by publication has enhanced my publishing skills and growth as an academic.

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUDING THE STUDY

11.0 Introduction

This was an exploratory inductive study that focused on the recurrent problem of school arson in Kenyan secondary schools with specific reference to boys' schools and the school fires that happened in 2016. An inductive thematic analysis of the data collected from multiple sources revealed that school arson is a complex multi-faceted problem with multiple understandings. The main theoretical contribution for this study was the use of social representations theory that allowed for the triangulation of data (Patton, 1999, p.1195) across multiple data sets to build a complex picture of the multiple understandings of school arson. Combining social representations and inductive thematic analysis allowed for the most commonly occurring themes as well as thematic differences between data sets and groups of participants to be explored (Joffe, 2012. p.217).

In Parts 2, I examined the views presented in government reports through an inductive thematic analysis of the four government reports. I also interrogated the social representations of school arson in Kenyan print media and social media. In part 3, I explored the social representations of school arson among selected secondary school teachers, students and parents of secondary school students.

In this chapter, I will conclude the study by examining the multiple understandings of school arson and pointing out areas of agreement and disagreement before presenting an overall picture of the discourse on school arson. I cannot claim that the picture is complete or fully coherent, but I do believe I have a better understanding of how school arson is understood in Kenya than I had at the start of this study. I will also discuss my thoughts on the possible implications of the findings and what they mean for educators, psychologists and

schooling in Kenya as currently constituted. I will conclude by presenting my thoughts on potential areas of future research.

11.1. Government reports

A brief inductive thematic analysis of government reports revealed that although government taskforces are appointed following a school fires crisis, none of them specifically investigates school arson. School arson is investigated under the umbrella term 'school unrest'. School unrest, as constructed in government reports, has causes and solutions. Therefore, government reports contain broad repetitive categories of reasons as causes of school unrest as well as overarching categories of recommendations as possible solutions for the problem. Below I provide a summary of the salient themes in government reports:

Table 8: Summary of salient themes in government reports

Possible causes	**Suggested solutions/Recommendations**
• Protest against bad boarding school experience • Bad parenting • Societal moral decay • Technology	Retribution (exclusion of bad apples) vs Dialogue/Consultation/Guidance and counselling /Chaplains

While the government taskforces that generate these reports do not solely address the recurrent problem of school arson, their findings (the broad categories of causes and suggested solutions) seem to recur in data sets that were coded specifically for school arson. It can be arguably observed that the government position on the recurrent problem of school arson seems to influence the general discourse on school arson but at the same time influence areas of disagreement as demonstrated by some of the findings, especially from focus group discussions.

11.2. Social representations of school arson

The multiple understandings of school arson fall into two categories: the outside view presented by print media and on social media, and the inside view as presented in focus group discussions with selected students, teachers and parents. Print media journalists seemed to echo the same themes found in government reports. However, the discourse on print media went beyond addressing the specifics of school arson. School arson became a tool for making a comment on the postcolonial globalised Kenyan society. This role of school arson as a way into talking about what it means to be a Kenyan today proved to be a consistent theme that is recurring in other data sets.

The emergence of new media added another dimension into the discourse on school arson. The results of an analysis of social media posts revealed that the discourse on school fires was not student-led nor influenced by contagion effects on Twitter. In the discussions about school fires, technology, specifically social media, was blamed for fuelling the school fires crisis. However, the study showed that blaming social media (as far as Twitter is concerned) is to, "…project society's guilt and shame onto objects" (Fuchs, 2012. p.386). Secondly, the analysis showed that Kenyan Twitter users did vicariously experience trauma, and they expressed their sad feelings in their tweets. However, they also posted tweets that harshly criticised, condemned and vilified the students. The harsh criticism may as well have ended up re-traumatising the students. However, the recurrent nature of school fires raises fundamental questions about how Kenyans view themselves. What does it mean to be Kenyan in the current postcolonial context? What is it about Kenya that school arson recurs and has persisted for so long?

The multiple understandings of school arson have made it possible to interrogate potential areas of conflict and probable explanations for the problem has persisted for over twenty years despite the attempts made to find solutions. Individuals, using the same

knowledge, can construct different meanings depending on their position, the amount of information available to them and how relevant the information is to their value system (Rateau, Moliner, Guimelli, & Abric, 2012, p.482). All the meanings constructed can be "valid". This particular aspect of social representations theory has been consistently demonstrated in the analysis of the data corpus. For instance, when the government of Kenya enacted the Children's Act (Government of Kenya, 2001), the aim was to protect children from violence. However, teachers and parents understand the Act as an affront on their authority and a hindrance to the management of children's misbehaviour. In a way, this may explain why the alternative method (guidance and counselling) of managing misbehaviour in schools may be failing. The challenge then remains: how to get teachers and parents to believe in the idea of managing behaviour without corporal punishment. Reinstating corporal punishment may not yield the expected result. It is no longer tenable to tell children, "I'm right and you're wrong, I'm big and you're small, and there's nothing you can do about it" (DeVito, 1996) – in a film adaptation of the book *Matilda* by (Dahl, 1988). Children, at least the ones I held discussions with, seem to be aware of their rights. The idea that it may be possible to return to socially constructed "pure" Kenyan values unaffected by the rest of the world does not seem to me to be tenable. Kenya is part of the bigger world of which many of my participants and many of those writing about school fires seem to feel at best ambivalent. It is not unusual in discussions of what is viewed as children's bad or problematic behaviour to make reference to an earlier, more simple world in which children knew their place (Adams, 2019), but this kind of argument takes on a particular meaning in the contemporary postcolonial Kenyan context where even, as I have shown, cabinet ministers argue that their own policies are out of step with what they construct as authentic Kenyan values.

I now provide a summary of how I see this operate in the data. Although there were multiple understandings of school arson and different themes constructed across data sets, the

discussions in both secondary data and in the focus groups all moved beyond the discussion of the specifics of the school fires that happened in individual schools. The discussions evolved quickly to make a commentary on the broader social issues about contemporary Kenyan society. There is constant reference to the differences between an idealised past Kenyan society in which things worked, where children were well behaved and parents and teachers had authority, unlike a current Kenya that is affected by Western culture and general liberal view about childrearing practices. The salient themes across the four data sets are summarised in the figure below:

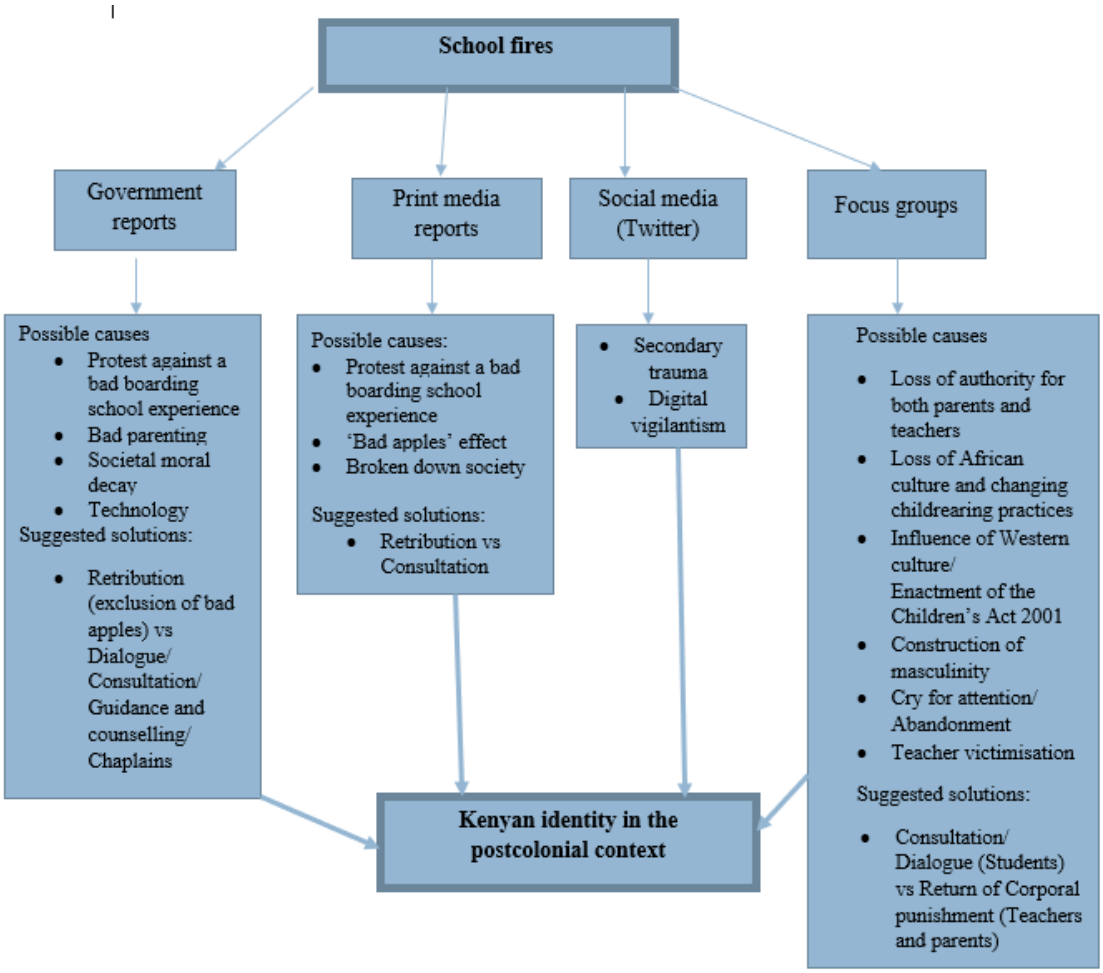


Figure 5: Summary of salient themes across data sets

The general discourse on school arson seems to revolve around the question of who is a real Kenyan journalist, a Kenyan teacher, Kenyan parent or even Kenyan boy (man) in the

current post-colonial context. It seems as though the recurrent problem of school arson has brought to consciousness a concern that something is lost. Across all data sets there seems to be an underlying shared view that this loss may be part of the reason why children are out of control.

11.3. Implications of the study

The study has helped map out different understandings of school arson. It is now clear that the views of students, parents and teachers had not been fully incorporated into the national discourse on school arson. The media framing of school arson has often presented the official view presented in government reports and ministerial statements on the school fires crisis. It will probably not be possible to find long-lasting solutions to the problem of school arson without taking into account the views of the insiders, especially the views of students and teachers, who bear the consequences of school arson directly. The other under-explored aspect of the school fires crisis is the emotional toll this crisis has on teachers. The teachers' well-being needs to be taken into account because it may directly affect how schools operate and how students experience schooling. It is worth noting that, so far, teachers have not been fully engaged in finding solutions, as revealed in focus group discussions with teachers.

In an attempt to provide a forum for the inside view, this study has helped reveal new understandings of school arson that have so far remained unexplored. For instance, while there have been more boys' schools experiencing school unrest, the relationship between school arson and the construction of masculinity has not been extensively explored. It is noteworthy that, for instance, in the latest government report (Republic of Kenya, 2016), the tally of schools that experienced arson is not analysed according to gender. Sundaram (2014) has argued that it is essential to seek young people's understandings of violence when developing targeted violence prevention initiatives (p.11). Further, violence prevention

programmes need to acknowledge the role gender stereotypes and expectations play in producing violence (Sundaram, 2014, p.22). Sundaram (2014) has further reiterated the potential of schools in "…disrupting the gender norms that underlie and produce violence, and are reflected through enactments of violence" (p.23). Echoing the words of Stoltz (2005), it is time for Kenyan educators as well as those who work to prevent youth violence to take the negative implications of male stereotyping (hegemonic masculinity) seriously and help boys re-define who they want to be (p.61).

This study did not set out to find an ultimate solution to the problem of school arson, but rather to understand the different understandings of school arson. By the time of writing this thesis, there were already multiple further reports of school arson. In one report, four students had been charged with setting a dormitory on fire (Wanyoro, 2019). In yet another report, students set a dormitory on fire after being denied a chance to watch a football match (Ukaya, 2019). As one Twitter user said, a school fire could be coming to a school near you! However, it is hoped that these understandings will help in designing preventive strategies, especially those that focus on the schooling experience and the interaction between students and teachers.

11.4. Limitations of the study

The primary data collected through focus group discussions were from four boys' schools only located in three counties out of the forty-seven counties in Kenya. While we can confidently say that the study does undertake an in-depth review of the discourse that exists on school arson, I can hardly claim that the study has gathered all the views on school arson. There is still need for further research to understand the understandings of students in girls' schools (those that have experienced arson and those that have not), the views of their teachers and parents, the understandings of the alleged perpetrators of school arson, the construction of gender among female students among others.

I used extreme case sampling to choose my research participants when collecting primary data. Although the sample provides rich data, the findings of this study are not generalisable.

Thirdly, although I have referred extensively to the government reports, I did not gather views from staff at the Ministry of Education. Their views would have enriched our understandings of the discourse on school arson especially in understanding why commissions of inquiry are a preferred mode of responding to the recurrent problem of school arson. Secondly, their views on the enactment of the Children's Act (Government of Kenya, 2001) would have given a new perspective on the debate about the lifting of the ban on corporal punishment.

11.5. Future Research

In the discourse on school arson, students who are suspected arsonists are treated as criminals according to the penal code. However, Martin, Bergen, Richardson, Roeger, & Allison (2004), in reference to the Australian context, noted that there is a strong relationship between adolescent fire setting behaviour and antisocial behaviour (p.152). It may well be that, in the Kenyan context, what suspected arsonists need is not prosecution and exclusion from school but psychological assessment and intervention. But this an area that requires further research, and I am aware as I say this that this idea in itself is highly psychologized and comes from its own discursive space in which the "psy" disciplines are seen as the rational solution to social problems (Barnhart, 2018).

In this regard, my study reveals that there is a strong view across data sets that there are a few bad students who engage in disruptive behaviour and that excluding them from school would solve the problem of school arson. One of the recommendations in the latest government report, for instance, is the establishment of Borstal institutions and rehabilitation centres to hold students convicted by courts of law to enable them continue with their studies

(Republic of Kenya, 2016, p.99). This approach pathologizes the student (Bantjes & Nieuwoudt, 2011, p.31), provides a strong motivation for exclusion from school and ignores contextual problems that make school arson more likely. In Kenya, sometimes discussions on school arson reveal dynamics that are often ignored. During the analysis of newspapers, I came across two commentaries that raised a vital question about school arson:

> "We post the best teachers to the top schools and admit the cream to these institutions while consigning the mediocre ones to backwater schools. …They are driven to succeed." (Ondari, 2016)
>
> "None of the old 17 national schools have experienced riots, a testament to the fact that they are generally well endowed with resources and are reasonably managed effectively." (Aduda, 2016)

There seems to be inadvertent discrimination in resource allocation. It is probable that some schools are neglected and run down. Arson is more common in these schools. I took the photograph of a new, post-arson dormitory below (Figure 6) during one of the focus group discussions. A student remarked that the fire had at least earned them "a decent dormitory":

Figure 6: Post-arson dormitory

While the duality in the symbolism of fire as an agent of destruction and renewal is a classic example of social representations, it does raise very serious questions on the management of schools, and how children experience schooling in the Kenyan context. It means that the task at hand for educators and psychologists among others is to shift focus towards rigorous research to provide an enhanced understanding of school arson so that the policies and proposed solutions can be targeted, relevant, contextualised and practical instead of focusing on excluding 'bad apples.

This study started out of a need to understand the different understandings of school arson, but it ends as a study steeped in controversy, polyphasia and a quest for a constructed authentic Kenyan identity in the postcolonial context. The overarching underlying concern is the question of the interface between global trends especially in terms of children's rights, alongside human rights, and cultural relativism (in terms of managing children's behaviour).

This seems to be a spreading trend in Africa as Africans interrogate the effects of colonialism on African culture. The president of Tanzania was recently on record questioning international human rights efforts, wondering, "What human rights are they talking about?" (Ng'wanakilala, 2019). There is often reference back to an idealised African past when children were well-behaved and adults had authority. But the question that arises is what were the cultural 'knowledges' on behaviour modification? Tafa (2002) notes that there is no evidence that children were flogged in pre-colonial days (p.23). The past may be being idealised, but it is being reconstructed and reinterpreted through the lens of the present.

The immediate steps for me beyond this dissertation are threefold. The first step is to re-design the syllabus for my student teachers. Second, is to create an in-service course to help equip teachers already in the field in managing behaviour and managing victimisation. The third, more critical, is to engage in research on how to 'vernacularize' behaviour modification as a psychological construct. Can there be a 'culturally sensitive' behaviour modification model that does not carry colonial baggage but which is devoid of corporal punishment? This is a difficult and challenging question for me, and one with which I will have to engage, aware, even as I ask the question, that I will be seen by some as representing part of the very problem – the dilemma of what it means to be a contemporary Kenyan – with which I would need to engage.

REFERENCES

Abramovay, M., & Rua, M. D. G. (2002). *Violences in schools*. Brasilia.

Achieng, J. (2001). The death of school children remains a mystery. Retrieved April 10, 2017, from www.ipsnews.net

Adams, K. A. (2019). Traumatic fundamentalist childhood and Trump. *The Journal of Psychohistory*, *46*(3), 158–178.

Aduda, D. (2016, July 24). Refusal by principals to assist in KCSE cheating among the causes of violence. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved from https://mobile.nation.co.ke/news/reluctance-to-abet-cheating-in-KCSE-among-the-causes-of-violence/1950946-3308120-item-1-3akmra/index.html

Akiba, M., Letendre, G. K., Baker, D. P., & Goesling, B. (2002). Student victimization: national and school system effects on school violence in 37 nations. *American Educational Research Journal*, *39*(4), 829–853.

Akolo, J. (2016). Boy child neglect cause of schools unrest. Retrieved from www.kbctv.co.ke

Alshenqeeti, H. (2014). Interviewing as a data collection method: A critical review. *English Linguistics Research*, *3*(1), 39–45.

Artz, S., Riecken, T., MacIntyre, B., Lam, E., & Maczewski, M. (2000). Theorizing gender differences in receptivity to violence prevention programmes in schools. *BC Counsellor*, *22*(1), 7–36.

Badley, G. (2009). Publish and be doctor-rated: the PhD by published work. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *17*(4), 331–342. https://doi.org/10.1108/09684880910992313

Bantjes, J., & Nieuwoudt, J. (2011). A group-analytic formulation of an incident of disruptive behaviour in a school. *Psycho-Analytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*, *19*(2), 29–65.

Barbour, R. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research: A student guide to the craft of doing qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Barnhart, M. (2018). Oppositional defiant disorder: The Psy apparatuses and youth resistance. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, *29*(1), 6–27. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.80/10428232.2017.1394788

Bauer, M. W., & Gaskell, G. (1999). Towards a paradigm for research on social representations. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *29*(2), 163-+. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5914.00096

Benbenishty, R., Astor, R. A., & Estrada, J. N. (2008). School violence assessment: a conceptual framework, instruments, and methods. *Children & Schools*, *30*(2), 71-81 11p. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/30.2.71

Billig, M. (1993). Studying the thinking society: Social representations, rhetoric, and attitudes. In *Empirical approaches to social representations* (pp. 39–62). Oxford:

Oxford University Press.

Bockler, N., Seegar, T., Sitzer, P., & Heitmeyer, W. (2013). School shootings: conceptual framework and international empirical trends. In N. Bockler, T. Seeger, P. Sitzer, & W. Heitmeyer (Eds.), *School shootings: international research, case studies, and concepts for prevention* (pp. 1–24). https://doi.org/10,1007/978-4614-5526-4

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology, Vol 2: Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, Neuropsychological, and Biological.*, *2*, 57–71. https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *00*(00), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism* (London). Routledge.

Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, *41*(5), 545–547. https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547

Collins, K. M. T. (2010). Advanced sampling designs in mixed research: Current practices and emerging trends in the social and behavioural sciences. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research* (2nd ed., pp. 353–377). Los Angeles: Sage.

Cooper, E. (2014). Students, arson, and protest politics in Kenya: School fires as political action. *African Affairs*, *113*(453), 583–600. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adu059

Corlett, S., & Mavin, S. (2018). Reflexivity and researcher positionality. In C. Cassell, A. L. Cunliffe, & G. Grandy (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative business and management research methods* (pp. 377–399). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Dahl, R. (1988). *Matilda*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.

Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Development, K. I. of C. (2017). *Basic education curriculum framework*. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412958806.n62

DeVito, D. (1996). *Matilda*. United States: Tristar Pictures, Inc.

DiGiulio, R. C. (2001). *Educate, medicate or litigate? What teachers, parents, and administrators must do about student behavior*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Enjolras, B., Steen-Johnsen, K., & Wollebaek, D. (2012). Social media and mobilization to

offline demonstrations: Transcending participatory divides? *New Media & Society*, *15*(6), 890–908. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812462844

Eshiwani, G. S. (1993). *Education in Kenya since independence*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Farrington, D. P., & Baldry, A. C. (2010). Individual risk factors for school bullying. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, *2*(1), 4–16. https://doi.org/10.5042/jacpr.2010.0001

Finlay, L. (2002). "Outing" the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, *12*(4), 531–545. https://doi.org/10.1177/104973202129120052

Finlay, L. (2003). The reflexive journey: mapping multiple routes. In L. Finlay & B. Grough (Eds.), *Reflexivity: A practical guide for researchers in health and socail sciences* (pp. 3–20). Oxford: Blackwell Science Ltd.

Flores, R. L. (2005). Developmental aspects of school violence: a contextualist approach. In F. L. Denmark, H. S. Krauss, R. W. Wesner, E. Midlarsky, & U. P. Gielen (Eds.), *Violence in schools: cross-national and cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 75–84). New York: Springer Science + Business Media, Inc.

Foster, V., Kimmel, M., & Skelton, C. (2001). "What about the Boys?" An overview of the debates. In W. Martino & B. Meyenn (Eds.), *"What about the Boys?" Issues of Masculinity in Schools*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14759390500200428

Friese, S., Soratto, J., & Pires, D. (2018). *Carrying out a computer-aided thematic content analysis with ATLAS.ti* (No. 02). Gottingen.

Frost, N., & Bailey-Rodriguez, D. (2019). Quality in qualitative research. In C. Sullivan & M. A. Forrester (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research in psychology: A practical guide* (2nd ed., pp. 60–77). London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Fuchs, C. (2012). Behind the news: social media, riots, and revolutions. *Capital and Class*, *36*(3), 383–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816812453613

Fuchs, M. (2008). Impact of school context on violence at schools. A multi-level analysis. *International Journal of Violence and School*, *7*(December), 20–42.

Furlong, M. J., Morrison, G. M., Dewey, G., & Skiba, R. (2014). Methodological and measurement issues in school violence research. *Journal of School Violence*, *3*(2–3), 37–41. https://doi.org/10.1300/J202v03n02

Furlong, M., & Morrison, G. (2000). The school in school violence: Definitions and facts. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, *8*(2), 71–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/106342660000800203

Gibson, W., & Brown, A. (2009). *Working with qualitative data*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication Ltd.

Glenn, I. (2016). "Standing up for injustices"? *Litnet*, 12.

https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1245017

Goebert, H. (2002). *Beyond listening: learning the secret language of focus groups*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: an essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Government of Kenya. (2001). The Children's Act 2001. In *The Kenya Gazette Supplement, No 95, Acts No.8*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, O., & Makuvaza, N. (2017). Rethinking education in postcolonial Africa: Educating muhu/umuntu in Zimbabwe. In E. Shizha & N. Makuvaza (Eds.), *Re-thinking postcolonial education in the 21st century: Post-millenium development goals* (pp. 85–103). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Harber, C. (2001). Schooling and violence in South Africa: creating a safer school. *Intercultural Education*, *12*(3), 261–271. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980120087471

Healy-Clancy, M. (2013). *A world of their own: a history of South African women's education*. Scottsville: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press.

Hemmings, B. (2012). Sources of research confidence for early career academics: a qualitative study. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *31*(2), 171–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2011.559198

Hirschfield, P. J. (2008). Preparing for prison? The criminalization of school discipline in the USA. *Theoretical Criminology*, *12*(1), 79–101. https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1177/1362480607085795

Hirschfield, P. J. (2018). Trends in school social control in the United States: Explaining patterns of decriminalisation. In J. Deakin, E. Taylor, & A. Kupchik (Eds.), *The Palgrave international handbook of school discipline, surveillance, and social control* (pp. 43–64). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71559-9_3

Hoffman, J., & Roshdi, K. (2013). School shootings in Germany: research, prevention through risk assessment and threat management. In N. Bockler, T. Seegar, P. Sitzer, & W. Heitmeyer (Eds.), *School shootings: international research, case studies, and concepts for prevention* (pp. 363–378). https://doi.org/10,1007/978-4614-5526-4

Höijer, B. (2011). Social representations theory: A new theory for media research. *Nordicom Review*, *32*(2), 3–16.

Højholt, C., & Kousholt, D. (2020). Contradictions and conflicts: Researching school as conflictual social practice. *Theory and Psychology*, *30*(1), 36–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354319884129

Hong, J. S., Cho, H., Allen-Meares, P., & Espelage, D. L. (2011). The social ecology of the Columbine high school shootings. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(6), 861–868. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.12.005

Hong, J. S., & Eamon, M. K. (2009). An ecological approach to understanding peer

victimization in South Korea. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *19*(5), 611–625. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911350902987482

Howarth, C. (2006). A social representation is not a quiet thing: exploring the critical potential of social representations theory. *The British Journal of Social Psychology / the British Psychological Society*, *45*, 65–86. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605X43777

Howitt, D. (2010). *Introduction to qualitative methods in psychology*. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd.

Hyman, I. A., & Perone, D. C. (1998). The other side of school violence: Educator policies and practices that may contribute to student misbehavior. *Journal of School Psychology*, *36*(1), 7–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405(97)87007-0

James, K., Bunch, J., & Clay-Warner, J. (2015). Perceived injustice and school violence: An application of general strain theory. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, *13*(2), 169–189. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204014521251

Jimerson, S. R., Hart, S. R., & Renshaw, T. L. (2012). Conceptual foundations for understanding youth engaged in antisocial and aggressive beaviors. In S. R. Jimerson, A. B. Nickerson, M. J. Mayer, & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *Handbook of school violence and school safety: International research and practice* (2nd ed., pp. 3–14). https://doi.org/978-0-415-88461-7

Joffe, H. (2012). Thematic Analysis. In D. Harper & A. R. Thompson (Eds.), *Qualitative Research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: a guide for students and practitioners* (pp. 209–223). West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Jovchelovitch, S. (1996). In defence of representations. *Journal of the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *26*(2), 121–135.

Kinyanjui, K. (1976). Secondary school strikes: The art of blaming the victim. *Discussion Paper No. 243*. Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi.

Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research: introducing focus groups. *The BMJ*, *311*, 299–302.

Koo, H., Kwak, K., & Smith, P. K. (2008). Victimization in Korean schools: the nature, incidence, and distinctive features of Korean bullying or wang-ta. *Journal of School Violence*, *7*(4), 119–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220801974084

Kupchik, A., & Bracy, N. L. (2009). The news media on school crime and violence: Constructing dangerousness and fueling fear. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, *7*(2), 136–155. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204008328800

Larkin, R. W. (2007). *Comprehending Columbine*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Lee, S., & Oh, I. (2012). School violence in South Korea: an overview of school violence and intervention efforts. In *Handbook of school violence and school safety* (pp. 541–553). New York: Taylor & Francis.

Lungai, E. (2016). Boys neglected in favour of girls, say school heads. Retrieved April 1, 2017, from https//:www.standardmedia.co.ke

Malenya, F. L. (2016). Students, violent protests and the process of self-realization in Kenyan secondary schools. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, *18*(2), 67–82.

Martin, G., Bergen, H. A., Richardson, A. S., Roeger, L., & Allison, S. (2004). Correlates of firesetting in a community sample of young adolescents. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *38*, 148–154.

Mason, S., & Merga, M. (2018). Integrating publications in the social science doctoral thesis by publication. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *37*(7), 1454–1471. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1498461

Meloy, J. ., Hempel, A. ., Mohandie, K., Shive, A. ., & Gray, B. . (2001). Offender and offense characteristics of a non-random sample of adolescent mass murderers. *Journal of the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *40*, 719–728.

Merga, M. K. (2015). Thesis by publication in education: An autoethnographic perspective for educational researchers. *Issues in Educational Research*, *25*(3), 291–308.

Midlarsky, E., & Klain, H. M. (2005). A history of school violence in the schools. In F. Denmark, H. K. Krauss, R. W. Wesner, E. Midlarsky, & U. P. Gielen (Eds.), *Violence in schools: cross-national and cross-cultural perspectives*. New York, NY: Springer Science + Business Media, Inc.

Ministry of Education. (1991). *Report of the presidential committee on unrest and indiscipline in Kenyan secondary schools*. Nairobi. Unpublished.

Ministry of Education. (2001). *Report of the task force on student discipline and unrest in secondary schools*. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.

Moon, B., Hwang, H. ., & McCluskey, J. . (2011). Causes of school bullying: Empirical test of a general theory of crime, differential association theory, and general strain theory. *Crime and Delinquency*, *57*(6), 849–877.

Morgan, D. L. (2019). *Basic and advanced focus groups*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Morgan, D. L., & Hoffman, K. (2018). Focus groups. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 250–263). London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Morgan, D. L., & Krueger, R. A. (1993). When to use focus groups and why. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 3–19). https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483349008.n1

Moscovici, S. (1984). The phenomenon of social representations. In S. Farr, R. and Moscovici (Ed.), *Social representations* (pp. 3–69). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moscovici, Serge, & Duveen, G. (2000). The phenomenon of social representations. In Serge Moscovici & G. Duveen (Eds.), *Social Representations: Explorations in Social Psychology* (pp. 18–77). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mureithi, F. (2016, September 6). Study past proposals to better manage schools, head

teachers told. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved from https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/nakuru/Study-past-proposals-to-better-manage-schools--head-teachers-tol/1183314-3374594-6kipvaz/index.html

Muschert, G. W. (2007). Research in school shootings. *Sociology Compass*, *1*(1), 60–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00008.x

Muschert, G. W., & Sumiala, J. (2012). Introduction: school shootings as mediatized violence. In G. W. Muschert & J. Sumiala (Eds.), *School shootings: Mediatized violence in a global age* (pp. XV–XXIX). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Newman, K. ., Fox, C., Harding, D., Mehta, J., & Roth, W. (2004). *Rampage: The social roots of school shootings*. New York: Perseus Books.

Ng'wanakilala, F. (2019, October 4). Tanzanian president supports official who beat students with a stick. *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tanzania-rights/tanzanian-president-backs-official-who-beat-students-with-a-stick-idUSKBN1WJ24W

Ngwiri, M. (2018, July 7). The second term curse has struck, let's save our schools. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved from https://www.nation.co.ke/oped/opinion/second-term-curse-has-struck-schools/440808-4650170-h5ubbu/index.html

Nieuwenhuis, J. (2007). Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First Steps in Research* (pp. 69–97). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Niven, P., & Grant, C. (2012). PhDs by publications: an "easy way out"? *Teaching in Higher Education*, *17*(1), 105–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2012.640086

Oketch, M., & Somerset, A. (2010). Free Primary Education and after in Kenya: Enrolment Impact, Quality Effects, and the Transition to Secondary School. In *Online Submission*.

Olson, J. B. (1972). Secondary schools and elites in Kenya: A comparative study of students in 1961and 1968. *Comparative Education Review*, *16*(1), 44–53. Retrieved from htpps://www.jstor.org/stable/1186341

Ondari, M. E. (2016, July 5). The times have changed, and so should dealing with discipline. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved from https://mobile.nation.co.ke/blogs/The-times-have-changed--and-so-should-dealing-with-discipline/1949942-3279860-ginfd6z/index.html

Palaganas, E. C., Sanchez, M. C., Caricativo, R. D., & Molintas, M. P. (2017). Reflexivity in qualitative research: A journey of learning. *The Qualitative Report*, *22*(2), 426–438.

Parks, P. J. (2009). *School violence*. San Diego, CA: ReferencePoint Press, Inc.

Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Services Research*, *35*(5 Pt 2), 1189–1208.

Peterson, R. L., & Skiba, R. (2001). Creating school climates that prevent school violence. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, *73*(3), 155–163. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098650109599183

Rateau, P., Moliner, P., Guimelli, C., & Abric, J.-C. (2012). Social representations theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *The handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 477–497). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication Ltd.

Raynor, K., Matthews, T., & Mayere, S. (2017). Shaping urban consolidation debates: social representations in Brisbane newspaper media. *Urban Studies*, *54*(6), 1519–1536.

Republic of Kenya. (2008). *Report of the departmental committee on education, research and technology on the inquiry into students' unrests and strikes in secondary schools*. Nairobi. Unpublished.

Republic of Kenya. (2016). *The Report of the Special Investigations Team on School Unrest*. Nairobi. Unpublished.

Sarrica, M., & Contarello, A. (2004). Peace, war and conflict: Social representations shared by peace activists and non-activists. *Journal of Peace Research*, *41*(5), 549–568.

Schultink, W. (2016, August 2). What does burning schools have to do with Kenya's future? Retrieved February 3, 2017, from https//:www.unicef.org

Semin, G. . (1985). The "phenomenon of social representations": A comment on Potter and Litton. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *24*(2), 93–94.

Sifuna, D. (1990). *Development of education in Africa: The Kenyan experience*. Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers.

Sifuna, D. N., & Otiende, J. E. (2006). *An introductory history of education* (Revised Ed). Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.

Silverman, D. (2017). *Doing qualitative research*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Stoltz, J. (2005). Masculinity and school violence: Addressing the role of male gender socialization. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, *39*, 52–63.

Subramani, S. (2019). Practising reflexivity: Ethics, methodology and theory construction. *Methodological Innovations*, *12*(2), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799119863276

Sulitzeanu-Kenan, R. (2010). Reflection in the shadow of blame: When do politicians appoint commissions of inquiry? *British Journal of Political Science*, *40*(3), 613–634. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123410000049

Sundaram, V. (2013). Violence as understandable, deserved or unacceptable? Listening for gender in teenagers' talk about violence. *Gender and Education*, *25*(7), 889–906. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2013.858110

Sundaram, V. (2014). *Preventing youth violence: Rethinking the role of gender in schools*. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137365699

Tafa, E. (2002). Corporal punishment: the brutal face of Botswana's authoritarian schools. *Educational Review*, *54*(1), 17–26.

Taylor, E., Deakin, J., & Kupchik, A. (2018). The changing landscape of school discipline,

surveillance, and social control. In J. Deakin, E. Taylor, & A. Kupchik (Eds.), *The Palgrave international handbook of school discipline, surveillance, and social control* (pp. 1–13). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71559-9_1

Taylor, E., & Kearney, A. (2018). School discipline and surveillance: Developments in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. In J. Deakin, E. Taylor, & A. Kupchik (Eds.), *The Palgrave international handbook of school discipline, surveillance, and social control* (pp. 87–104). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71559-9_5

Toby, J. (1994). Everyday school violence: how disorder fuels it. *American Educator: The Professional Journal of the American Federation of Teachers*, *17*(4), 44–48.

Tooley, J., Dixon, P., & Stanfield, J. (2008). Impact of free primary education in Kenya: A case study of private schools in Kibera. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, *36*(4), 449–469. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143208095788

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ukaya, B. (2019). Uriri High School students burn dormitory after being denied chance to watch Kenya vs Algeria match. *The Standard*. Retrieved from https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001331176/students-set-dormitory-on-fire-after-being-denied-chance-to-watch-afcon-match

Verlinden, S., Hersen, M., & Thomas, J. (2000). Risk factors in school shootings. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *20*, 3–56.

Voelklein, C., & Howarth, C. (2005). A review of controversies about social representations theory: a British debate. *Culture & Psychology*, *11*(4), 431–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X05058586

wa Thiong'o, N. (2012). *In the house of the interpreter: a memoir*. London: Harvill Secker.

Wagner, W. and Hayes, N. (2005). *Everyday discourse and common sense: The theory of social representation*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wagner, W., Duveen, G., Farr, R., Jovchelovitch, S., Lorenzi-Cioldi, F., Markova, I., & Rose, D. (1999). Theory and method of social representations. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *2*, 95–125. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-839X.00028

Wanyoro, C. (2019). Four Igoji school students charged with burning dormitory. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved from https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/meru/Igoji-students-in-court-over-burnt-dorm/1183302-5200970-12ryi6i/index.html

Wanzala, O. (2017, September 3). Many die as disaster report gathers dust. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved from https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Police-quiz-students-as-8-girls-perish-in-dorm-fire/1056-4080752-6dmybaz/index.html

Whitley, R., & Crawford, M. (2005). Qualitative research in psychiatry. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *50*(2), 108–114. https://doi.org/10.1177/070674370505000206

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Interview Schedules

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

PRELIMINARIES

(Introduction)

I am interested in finding out what you think about the burning of schools. I will ask a few questions to get the discussion going. Feel free to discuss and to ask me questions. Anything you say in this discussion group will be kept confidential. Your identity will be kept anonymous in any written discussions done based on what will be discussed here today.

Date…….

Time…….

Setting……

Participants:

1) ……
2) ……
3) ……
4) ……
5) ……
6) …….
7) …….
8) …….

Age group: a) 14-17 b) 18-24 c) 25-35 d) 36-45 e) 46- 60

Profession (where applicable): ……

Years of teaching experience (where applicable) ……

Observations/Notes

……
……
……
……
……
……
……

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1: (STUDENTS IN A SCHOOL THAT EXPERIENCED ARSON)

i) Tell me something about yourselves.
ii) What, if anything, do you like about your school?
iii) What, if anything, don't you like about your school?
iv) Do you feel safe or unsafe when you are in school?
  a. What makes you feel safe? **Or**
  b. What are some of the things that make you feel unsafe?
v) In 2016 there was a fire in this school. Tell me about the day of the fire. (Where were you? What happened?)
vi) What happened after the fire? Were you sent home?
vii) Did anyone talk to you about the fire? (Your teachers or parents? What did you talk about?)
viii) Did you talk among yourselves about the school fire? (Tell me about those conversations you had among yourselves)
  a) What about on Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, among others? Were there any discussions among yourselves or students from other schools or online friends from different countries on social media?
  b) Tell me about those discussions
ix) Why do you think students set buildings on fire? (Why were those particular buildings set on fire)
x) Has anything changed in the school since the fire incident?
xi) Is there anything more you would like to tell me?

2) (STUDENTS IN A SCHOOL THAT HAS NOT EXPERIENCED ARSON)

i) Tell me something about yourselves.
ii) What, if anything, do you like about your school?
iii) What, if anything, don't you like about your school?
iv) Do you feel safe or unsafe when you are in school?
  a) What makes you feel safe? **Or**
  b) What are some of the things that make you feel unsafe?
v) In 2016 some schools like yours were burnt. Did you hear about them? Tell me what you thought about those fires?
vi) The students in those schools were sent home? How did that make you feel?
vii) Did anyone talk to you about the fires? (Your teachers or parents? What did they say?)
viii) Did you talk among yourselves about the school fires? (Tell me about those conversations you had among yourselves)

  a) What about on Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, among others? Were there any discussions among yourselves or students from other schools or online friends from different countries on social media?
  b) Tell me about those discussions.
ix) Why do you think students set buildings on fire?

x) Is there anything more you would like to tell me?

3) (TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS THAT EXPERIENCED ARSON)

i) Would you describe this school as a school in which the safety of teachers and students is guaranteed? (Why/Why not?)

ii) As teachers you have many roles besides teaching: you act as role models, administrators, you act in loco parentis, you punish, you are the link between the school and the community, and you are counsellors to students and parents among other roles.
   a) Which roles are easy? Which ones do you enjoy?
   b) Which ones are difficult or challenging? How? (Use probing questions to discuss further)
   c) Which roles affect your relationship with students? Parents? How? (Probe)

iii) In 2016 there was a fire in this school. Tell me about the day of the fire.

iv) Why do you think students set buildings on fire?

v) **a)** What would you say about the allegation that teachers incited students to burn their own school?
   b) How does this allegation make you feel?

vi) Have there been any changes in this school since the fire happened?

vii) Who has read the recommendations of the task force reports on student unrest and indiscipline? (Use follow-up questions to find out which government reports they have read.)

viii) If you were to talk to the students who burn schools, what would you say to them?

ix) Why do you think more boys' schools were set on fire?

x) Anything else you would like to tell me about school violence or arson?

4) (TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS THAT DID NOT EXPERIENCE ARSON)

i) Would you describe this school as a school in which the safety of teachers and students is guaranteed? (Why/Why not?)

ii) As teachers you have many roles besides teaching: you act as role models, administrators, you act in loco parentis, you punish, you are the link between the school and the community, and you are counsellors to students and parents among other roles.
   a) Which roles are easy? Which ones do you enjoy?
   b) Which ones are difficult or challenging? How? (Use probing questions to discuss further)
   c) Which roles affect your relationship with students? Parents? How? (Probe)

iii) In 2016, many secondary schools were set on fire. Tell me what you thought about those fires.

iv) Why do you think students set buildings on fire?

v) a) What would you say about the allegation that teachers incited students to burn their own school?
   b) How does this allegation make you feel?

vi) Your students did not set their school on fire but did you have any discussions about the fire incidents in the other schools? (Why/Why not?)

vii) Who has read the recommendations of the task force reports on student unrest and indiscipline? (Use follow-up questions to find out which government reports they have read.)

viii) If you were to talk to the students who burn schools, what would you say to them?

ix) Why do you think more boys' schools were set on fire?

x) Anything else you would like to tell me about school violence or arson?

5) (PARENTS OF SCHOOLS THAT EXPERIENCED ARSON)

i) Would you describe this school as a safe school for your sons? (Why/Why not)

ii) Tell me about the relationship between teachers and parents? (Would you say parents support teachers? And teachers support parents?) If so, in what ways?

iii) What about the relationship between parents and the school administration? (Do you have an opportunity to talk to the school administration any time you have concerns about your child?)

iv) In 2016, there was a fire in this school. Tell me what you thought about the fire.

v) Why do you think students set buildings on fire?

vi) **a)** What would you say about the allegation that students burn their own schools because parents have failed to bring them up properly?

b) How does this allegation make you feel?

vii) Did you have any discussions about the fire? (Why/Why not? If yes, what did you discuss?)

viii) If you were to talk to the students who burn school buildings, what would you say to them?

ix) Why do you think more boys' schools were set on fire?

x) Anything else you would like to tell me about school violence or arson?

6) (PARENTS OF SCHOOLS THAT DID NOT EXPERIENCE ARSON)

i) Would you describe this school as a safe school for your son? (Why/Why not)

ii) Tell me about the relationship between teachers and parents? (Would you say parents support teachers? And teachers support parents?) If so, in what ways?

iii) What about the relationship between parents and the school administration? (Do you have an opportunity to talk to the school any time you have concerns about your child?)

iv) In 2016, many secondary schools had their buildings set on fire. Tell me what you thought about the fires.

v) Why do you think students set buildings on fire?

vi) **a)** What would you say about the allegation that students burn their own schools because parents have failed to bring them up properly?

b) How does this kind of an allegation make you feel?

vii) Did you have any discussions about the fire? (Why/Why not? If yes, what did you discuss?)

viii) If you were to talk to the students who burn school buildings, what would you say to them?

ix) Why do you think more boys' schools were set on fire?

x) Anything else you would like to tell me about school violence or arson?

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL APPROVALS

Appendix B1- Stellenbosch University Humanities Research Ethics Committee Approval

UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC Humanities New Application Form

23 August 2017

Project number: REC-2017-0151-581

Project Title: Social representations of the burning of boys' secondary schools in Kenya in 2016

Dear Ms Hildah Oburu

Your REC Humanities New Application Form submitted on 9 August 2017 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities.

Please note the following about your approved submission:

Ethics approval period: 23 August 2017 - 22 August 2018

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (REC-2017-0151-581) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Data collection tool	PROPOSED INTERVIEW SCHEDULES	20/04/2017	Final draft
Default	Counsellor letter	01/06/2017	
Default	Kenya NACOSTI Registration	07/06/2017	
Default	GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE APPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH PERMIT KENYA	07/06/2017	
Parental consent form	SU HUMANITIES Parent-Legal guardian forms	20/07/2017	
Assent form	Assent forms for Group & Individual interviews	20/07/2017	
Informed Consent Form	Consent forms Combined	20/07/2017	
Default	Counsellor letter 2	31/07/2017	
Research Protocol/Proposal	PROPOSAL - 21486123	07/08/2017	8
Default	REC Letter	08/08/2017	

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

Page 1 of 3

Appendix B2: Kenya Permissions

Appendix B2(i): NACOSTI Approval (National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation)

NACOSTI

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: 020 400 7000,
0713 788787,0735404245
Fax: +254-20-318245,318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

NACOSTI, Upper Kabete
Off Waiyaki Way
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No. **NACOSTI/P/17/43769/19225** **Date: 21st September, 2017**

Hildah Bochere Oburu
Stellenbosch University
SOUTH AFRICA.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on ***"The social representations of the burning of boys secondary schools in Kenya in 2016,"*** I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **all Counties** for the period ending **21st September, 2018.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioners and the County Directors of Education, all Counties** before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit **a copy** of the final research report to the Commission within **one year** of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

GODFREY P. KALERWA MSc., MBA, MKIM
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

12/10/2017
COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KISII COUNTY

Copy to:

The County Commissioners
All Counties.

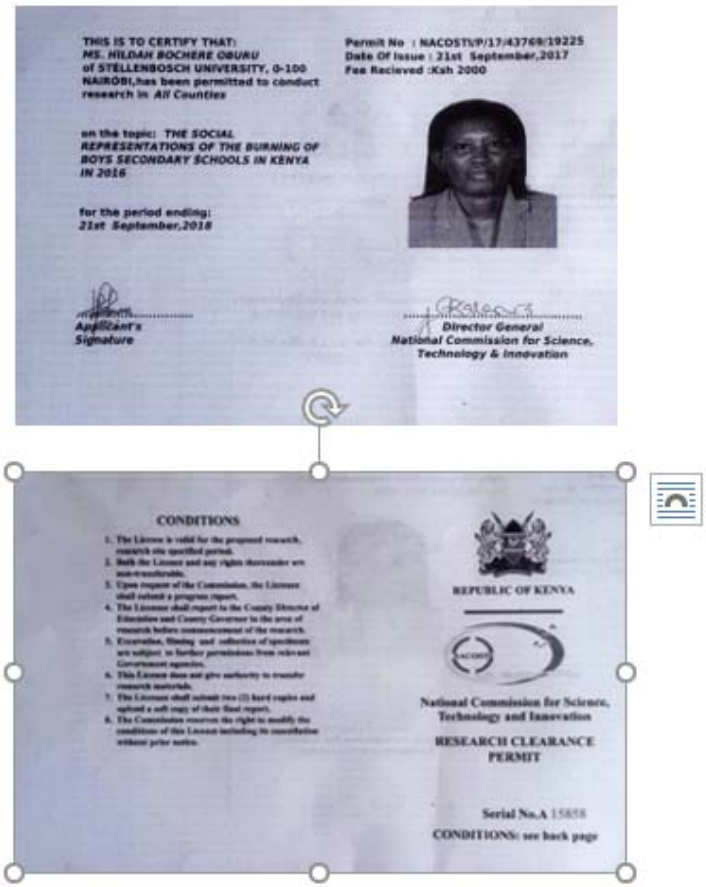
The County Directors of Education
All Counties.

FOR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
UASIN GISHU COUNTY
P.O. Box 9843, ELDORET
Tel: 0710-127 212/053-2063342

12/10/17
COUNTY COMMISSIONER
UASIN GISHU COUNTY

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation is ISO9001: 2008 Certified

Appendix B2(ii): NACOSTI Approval Certificate



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MS. HILDAH BOCHERE OBURU
of STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY, 0-100
NAIROBI,has been permitted to conduct
research in *All Counties*

on the topic: *THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BURNING OF BOYS SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA IN 2016*

for the period ending:
21st September,2018

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/17/43769/19225
Date Of Issue : 21st September,2017
Fee Recieved :Ksh 2000

Applicant's Signature

Director General
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation

CONDITIONS

1. The License is valid for the proposed research, research site specified period.
2. Both the License and any rights thereunder are non-transferable.
3. Upon request of the Commission, the Licensee shall submit a progress report.
4. The Licensee shall report to the County Director of Education and County Governor in the area of research before commencement of the research.
5. Excavation, filming and collection of specimens are subject to further permissions from relevant Government agencies.
6. This License does not give authority to transfer research materials.
7. The Licensee shall submit two (2) hard copies and upload a soft copy of their final report.
8. The Commission reserves the right to modify the conditions of this License including its cancellation without prior notice.

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

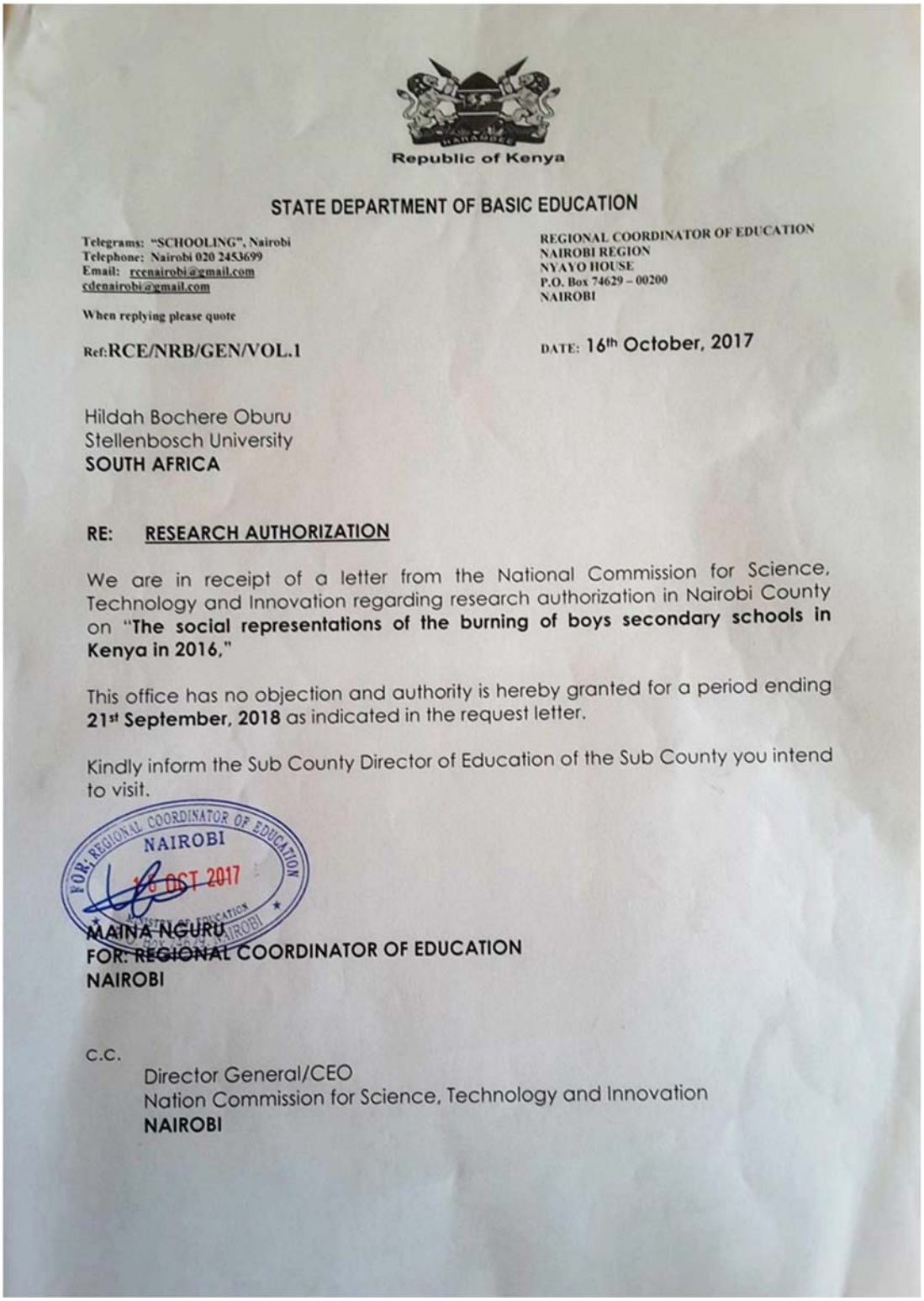
RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT

Serial No.A 15858

CONDITIONS: see back page

Appendix C: County Permissions

Appendix C1 (A): Nairobi County



Republic of Kenya

STATE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

Telegrams: "SCHOOLING", Nairobi
Telephone: Nairobi 020 2453699
Email: rcenairobi@gmail.com
cdenairobi@gmail.com

When replying please quote

Ref:RCE/NRB/GEN/VOL.1

REGIONAL COORDINATOR OF EDUCATION
NAIROBI REGION
NYAYO HOUSE
P.O. Box 74629 – 00200
NAIROBI

DATE: 16th October, 2017

Hildah Bochere Oburu
Stellenbosch University
SOUTH AFRICA

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

We are in receipt of a letter from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation regarding research authorization in Nairobi County on "**The social representations of the burning of boys secondary schools in Kenya in 2016,**"

This office has no objection and authority is hereby granted for a period ending **21st September, 2018** as indicated in the request letter.

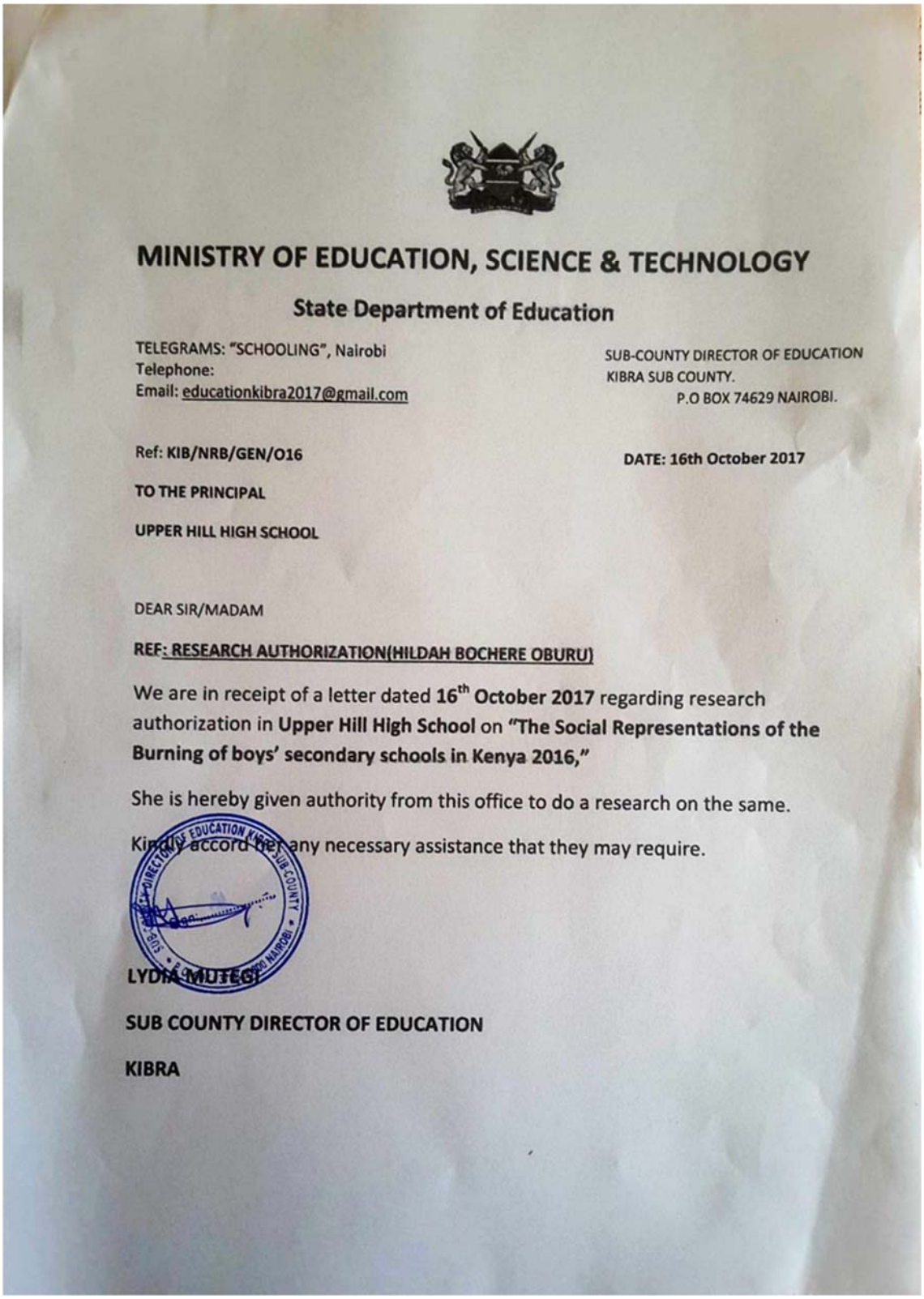
Kindly inform the Sub County Director of Education of the Sub County you intend to visit.

FOR: REGIONAL COORDINATOR OF EDUCATION NAIROBI 16 OCT 2017

MAINA NGURU
FOR: REGIONAL COORDINATOR OF EDUCATION
NAIROBI

c.c.
Director General/CEO
Nation Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NAIROBI

Appendix C1 (B): Nairobi County



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

State Department of Education

TELEGRAMS: "SCHOOLING", Nairobi
Telephone:
Email: educationkibra2017@gmail.com

SUB-COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KIBRA SUB COUNTY.
P.O BOX 74629 NAIROBI.

Ref: KIB/NRB/GEN/O16

DATE: 16th October 2017

TO THE PRINCIPAL

UPPER HILL HIGH SCHOOL

DEAR SIR/MADAM

REF: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION(HILDAH BOCHERE OBURU)

We are in receipt of a letter dated 16th October 2017 regarding research authorization in Upper Hill High School on "The Social Representations of the Burning of boys' secondary schools in Kenya 2016,"

She is hereby given authority from this office to do a research on the same.

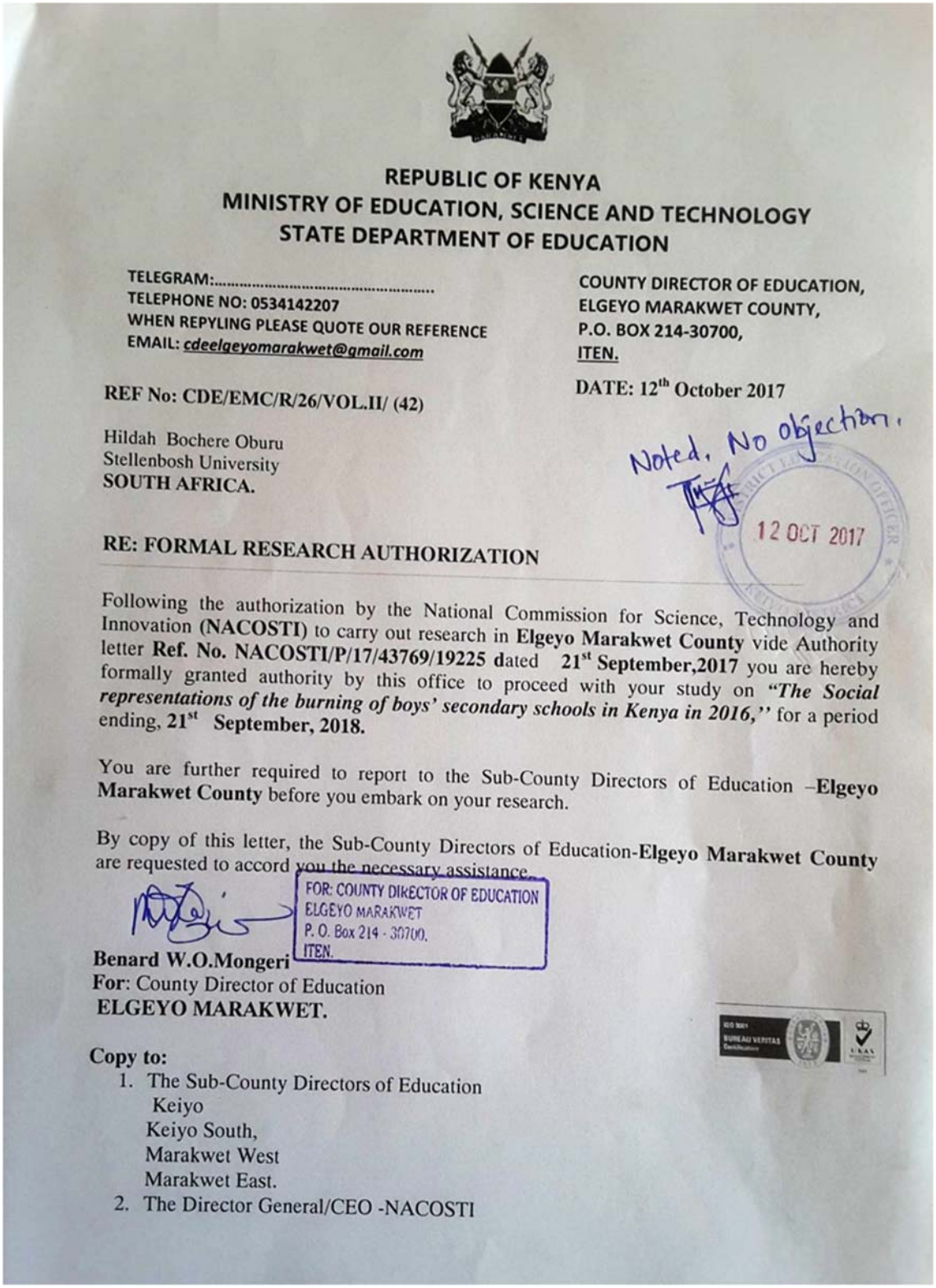
Kindly accord her any necessary assistance that they may require.

LYDIA MUTEGI

SUB COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

KIBRA

Appendix C2 (A): Elgeyo Marakwet County



REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TELEGRAM:.....
TELEPHONE NO: 0534142207
WHEN REPYLING PLEASE QUOTE OUR REFERENCE
EMAIL: cdeelgeyomarakwet@gmail.com

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,
ELGEYO MARAKWET COUNTY,
P.O. BOX 214-30700,
ITEN.

REF No: CDE/EMC/R/26/VOL.II/ (42)

DATE: 12th October 2017

Hildah Bochere Oburu
Stellenbosh University
SOUTH AFRICA.

Noted, No objection.

12 OCT 2017

RE: FORMAL RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following the authorization by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation **(NACOSTI)** to carry out research in **Elgeyo Marakwet County** vide Authority letter **Ref. No. NACOSTI/P/17/43769/19225** dated **21st September,2017** you are hereby formally granted authority by this office to proceed with your study on ***"The Social representations of the burning of boys' secondary schools in Kenya in 2016,"*** for a period ending, **21st September, 2018.**

You are further required to report to the Sub-County Directors of Education –**Elgeyo Marakwet County** before you embark on your research.

By copy of this letter, the Sub-County Directors of Education-**Elgeyo Marakwet County** are requested to accord you the necessary assistance.

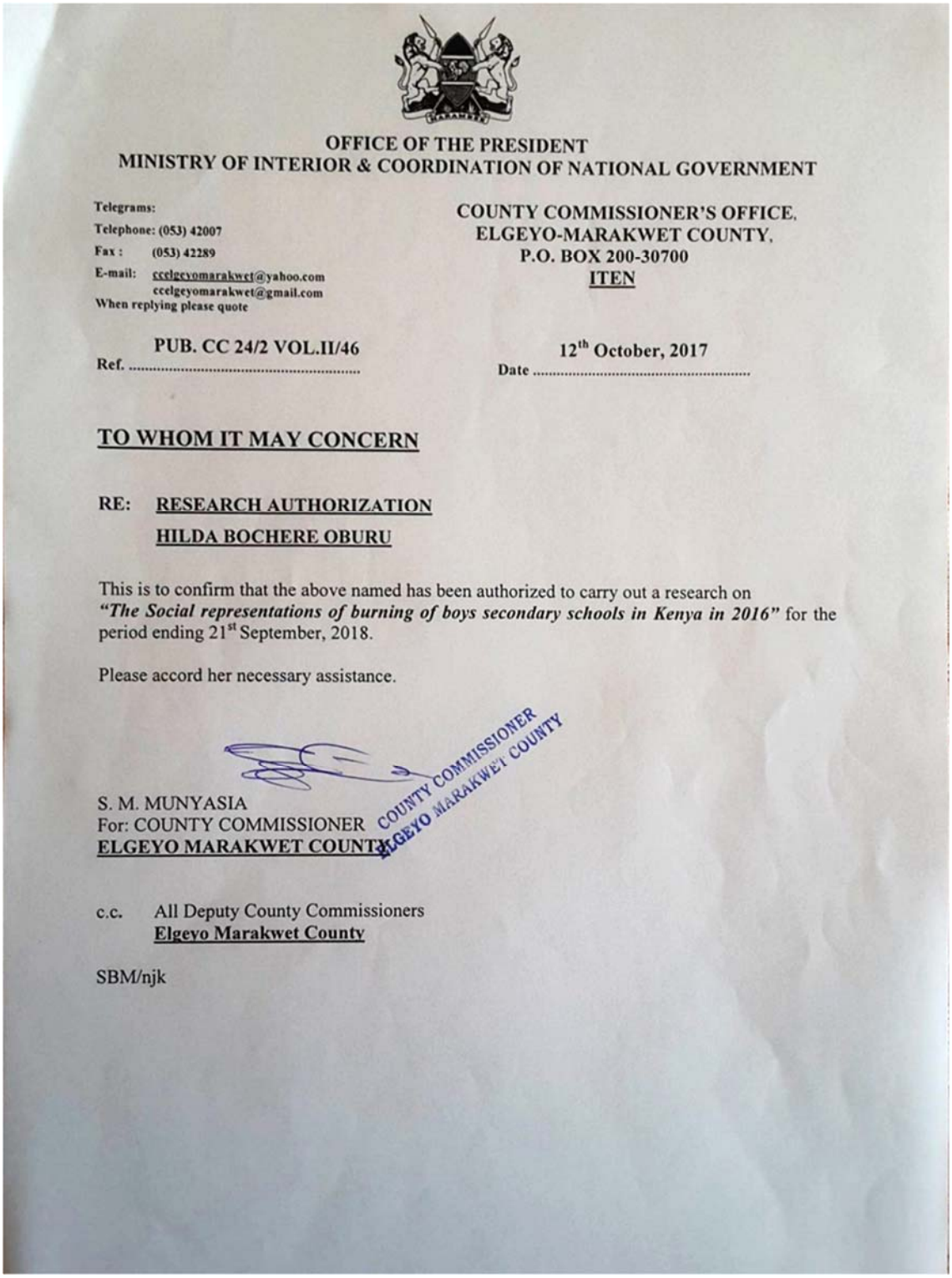
FOR: COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
ELGEYO MARAKWET
P. O. Box 214 - 30700,
ITEN.

Benard W.O.Mongeri
For: County Director of Education
ELGEYO MARAKWET.

Copy to:

1. The Sub-County Directors of Education
   Keiyo
   Keiyo South,
   Marakwet West
   Marakwet East.
2. The Director General/CEO -NACOSTI

Appendix C2 (B): Elgeyo Marakwet County



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR & COORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Telegrams:
Telephone: (053) 42007
Fax : (053) 42289
E-mail: ccelgeyomarakwet@yahoo.com
ccelgeyomarakwet@gmail.com
When replying please quote

COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE,
ELGEYO-MARAKWET COUNTY,
P.O. BOX 200-30700
ITEN

Ref. PUB. CC 24/2 VOL.II/46

Date 12th October, 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION
HILDA BOCHERE OBURU

This is to confirm that the above named has been authorized to carry out a research on ***"The Social representations of burning of boys secondary schools in Kenya in 2016"*** for the period ending 21st September, 2018.

Please accord her necessary assistance.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER ELGEYO MARAKWET COUNTY

S. M. MUNYASIA
For: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
ELGEYO MARAKWET COUNTY

c.c. All Deputy County Commissioners
Elgeyo Marakwet County

SBM/njk

Appendix C3: Kisii County

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

State Department for Basic Education

Telegram: "EDUCATION"
Telephone: 058-30695
Email address: cdekisii@gmail.com
When replying please quote

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KISII COUNTY
P.O. BOX 4499 - 40200
KISII.

Ref: CDE/KSI/II/8/77

Date: 17th October, 2017

Hildah Bochere Oburu
Stellanbosch University
SOUTH AFRICA.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION.

Following your research Authorization vide your letter ***Ref. NACOSTI/P/17/43769/19225*** to carry out research in Kisii County, this letter refers.

I am pleased to inform you that you can carry out your research in the County on "***The social representation of the burning of boys secondary schools in Kenya in 2016"*** for a period ending ***21st September, 2018.***

Wish you a successful research.

For COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KISII COUNTY
P. O. Box 4499 - 40200, KISII.
Date:.....
Sign:.....

Dr. William Sugut
County Director of Education
KISII COUNTY.

APPENDIX D: COUNSELLOR'S LETTERS

Appendix D1: Counsellor's Letter (Teachers and Parents)

CLMC

Chiromo Lane Medical Centre

P.O. Box [illegible] Nairobi,
Tel: 0729 339 501, 0700 263 143,
Chiromo Lane / Mathiki Road,
Westlands
E-mail: info@clmc.co.ke
website:www.clmc.co.ke

July 20, 2017

Ms. Hilda Oburu,

lect114@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Oburu,

RE: SCHOOL VIOLENCE

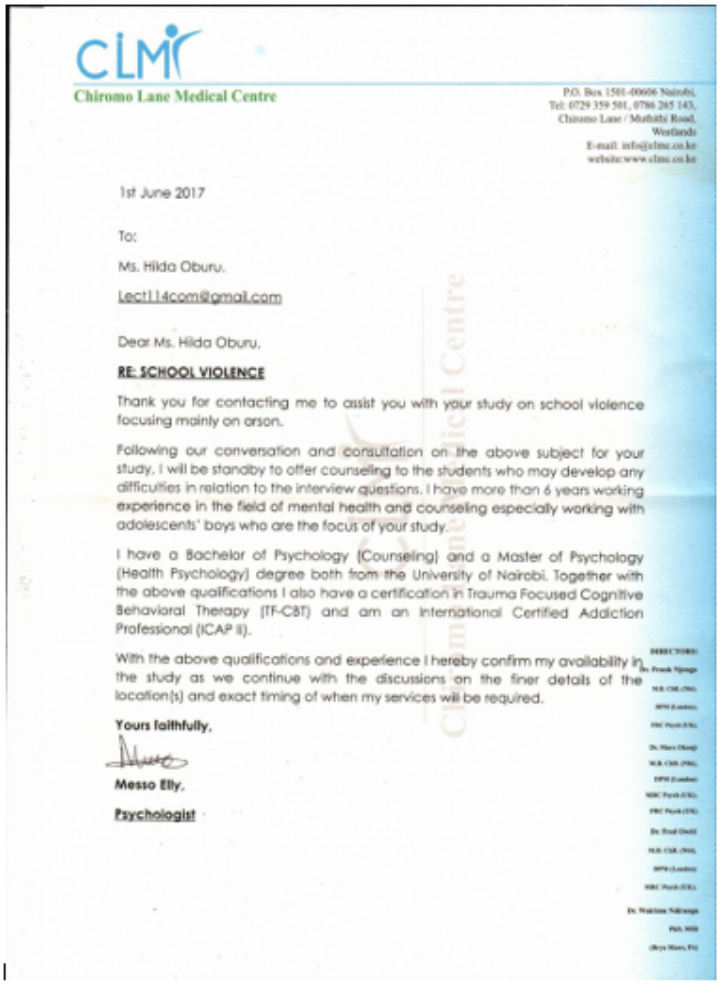
Following your request to include parents and teacher for counseling during and after the study on the above named subject, I hereby confirm that I will render my services to the named groups.

Yours faithfully,

Messo Elly,

Psychologist

Appendix D2: Counsellor's Letter (Students)



CLMC
Chiromo Lane Medical Centre

P.O. Box 1501-00606 Nairobi,
Tel: 0729 359 501, 0786 265 143,
Chiromo Lane / Muthithi Road,
Westlands
E-mail: info@clmc.co.ke
website:www.clmc.co.ke

1st June 2017

To:

Ms. Hilda Oburu.

Lect114com@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Hilda Oburu,

RE: SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Thank you for contacting me to assist you with your study on school violence focusing mainly on arson.

Following our conversation and consultation on the above subject for your study, I will be standby to offer counseling to the students who may develop any difficulties in relation to the interview questions. I have more than 6 years working experience in the field of mental health and counseling especially working with adolescents' boys who are the focus of your study.

I have a Bachelor of Psychology (Counseling) and a Master of Psychology (Health Psychology) degree both from the University of Nairobi. Together with the above qualifications I also have a certification in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and am an International Certified Addiction Professional (ICAP II).

With the above qualifications and experience I hereby confirm my availability in the study as we continue with the discussions on the finer details of the location(s) and exact timing of when my services will be required.

Yours faithfully,

Messo Elly,

Psychologist

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

APPENDIX E1: Teachers and Parents Consent Forms

(CONSENT FORMS FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM NON-ARSON SCHOOLS)

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

(Consent Form for Parents of boys in a school that did not experience arson –Group interviews)

Title of Study: Social representations of the burning of boys' secondary schools in Kenya in 2016

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Hildah Oburu, PhD candidate, from the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will be used in writing the PhD dissertation and research papers. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a parent of a boy in a boys' school where students did not set buildings on fire in 2016.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is seeking to find out your understanding of the burning of schools as well as what you think about the burning of schools by students.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in group discussions with other parents (both male and female). The discussions will be guided by me but you will be allowed to speak freely. The interviews will take about two hours. The interviews will be conducted in the school compound or in a location near the school. The discussions will be audio recorded so that I can analyse them later to write up the dissertation.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The interviews will contain questions about the school fires of 2016. But some questions may be upsetting especially if you have bad memories of the school fires. However, should you get upset you will be referred to a counselor for help. The counselling services will be free of charge.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this study you will be contributing towards the understanding of why students resort to setting school buildings on fire and help in preventing such incidents in future. You will especially be

contributing to the understanding of the experience of parents of students in schools that did not experience arson incidents.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

At the end of the interview, each participant will receive a stipend of Kshs. 3000 (R378) to cover transport and lunch costs.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of anonymously reporting the proceedings of the group discussions. No real names will be mentioned in any publications based on this study. Participants will be referred to as Parent 1, Parent 2, etc. All participants will be required to also maintain confidentiality and not divulge the group discussions to anyone outside the group.

The information collected will not be released to any other party. It will only be analysed by me with the help of my supervisor. You have a right to review the audio recordings after the interviews if you wish to. Once the study is completed the audio recordings will be held in custody by the researcher and destroyed later in accordance with Stellenbosch University guidelines for ethical research.

I will keep all our discussions confidential and at the beginning of the interview I will ask everyone in the group to maintain confidentiality. However, I cannot guarantee that everyone will keep our discussions confidential.

Please sign below that you understand that the researcher cannot guarantee that everyone in the group will keep discussions confidential.

_____

Name of participant

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Date**

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. This may happen if a participant fails to maintain confidentiality or fails to adhere to group rules and etiquette or threatens the well-being of other participants. Any information gathered from the participant will not be used in the study and it will be destroyed immediately.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact: Hildah Oburu through email: hildahbo@yahoo.com Tel: +254 734 129294 or Prof. Leslie Swartz through email: lswartz@sun.ac.za Tel: +27 82 4593559

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at Stellenbosch University's Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant]* by [*name of relevant person]* in English and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is]* in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject]* was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Subject/Participant **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant]* and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative]. [H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English.

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator **Date**

As the researcher, I would like to record all sessions using a digital voice recorder. This will help me get accurate information about what has been said. I will not give the recording to anyone other than a professional transcriber and my supervisor, Prof Swartz. Please sign that you agree to be audio recorded.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

(Consent Form for Teachers in a school that did not experience arson –Group interviews)

Title of Study: Social representations of the burning of boys' secondary schools in Kenya in 2016

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Hildah Oburu, PhD candidate, from the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will be used in writing the PhD dissertation and research papers. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a teacher in a boys' school where students did not set buildings on fire in 2016.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is seeking to find out your understanding of the burning of schools as well as what you think about the burning of schools by students.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in group discussions with other teachers (both male and female). The discussions will be guided by me but you will be allowed to speak freely. The interviews will take about two hours. The interviews will be conducted in the school compound or in a location near the school. The discussions will be audio recorded so that I can analyse them later to write up the dissertation.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The interviews will contain questions about the school fires of 2016. But some questions may be upsetting especially if you have bad memories of the school fires. However, should you get upset you will be referred to a counselor for help. The counseling services will be free of charge.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this study you will be contributing towards the understanding of why students resort to setting school buildings on fire and help in preventing such incidents in future. You will especially be contributing to the understanding of the experience of teachers in schools that did not experience arson incidents.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

At the end of the interview, each participant will receive a stipend of Kshs. 5000 (R640) to cover transport and lunch costs.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of anonymously reporting the proceedings of the group discussions. No real names will be mentioned in any publications based on this study. Participants will be referred to as Teacher1, Teacher 2, etc. All participants will be required to also maintain confidentiality and not divulge the group discussions to anyone outside the group.

The information collected will not be released to any other party. It will only be analysed by me with the help of my supervisor. You have a right to review the audio recordings after the interviews if you wish to. Once the study is completed the audio recordings will be held in custody by the researcher and destroyed later in accordance with Stellenbosch University guidelines for ethical research.

I will keep all our discussions confidential and at the beginning of the interview I will ask everyone in the group to maintain confidentiality. However, I cannot guarantee that everyone will keep our discussions confidential.

Please sign below that you understand that the researcher cannot guarantee that everyone in the group will keep discussions confidential.

_____

Name of participant

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Date**

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. This may happen if a participant fails to maintain confidentiality or fails to adhere to group rules and etiquette or threatens the well-being of other participants. Any information gathered from the participant will not be used in the study and it will be destroyed immediately.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact: Hildah Oburu through email: hildahbo@yahoo.com Tel: +254 734 129294 or Prof. Leslie Swartz through email: lswartz@sun.ac.za Tel: +27 82 4593559

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at Stellenbosch University's Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant]* by [*name of relevant person]* in English and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is]* in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject]* was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Subject/Participant Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant]* and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative]. [H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English.

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator **Date**

As the researcher, I would like to record all sessions using a digital voice recorder. This will help me get accurate information about what has been said. I will not give the recording to anyone other than a professional transcriber and my supervisor, Prof Swartz. Please sign that you agree to be audio recorded.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

(CONSENT FORMS FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM SCHOOLS THAT EXPERIENCED ARSON)

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

(Consent Form for Parents in a school that experienced arson –Group interviews)

Title of Study: Social representations of the burning of boys' secondary schools in Kenya in 2016

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Hildah Oburu, PhD candidate, from the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will be used in writing the PhD dissertation and research papers. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a parent in a boys' school where students set buildings on fire in 2016.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is seeking to find out your understanding of the burning of schools as well as what you think about the burning of schools by students.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in group discussions with other parents (both male and female). The discussions will be guided by me but you will be allowed to speak freely. The interviews will take about two hours. The interviews will be conducted in the school compound or in a location near the school. The discussions will be audio recorded so that I can analyse them later to write up the dissertation.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The interviews will contain questions about the school fires of 2016. But some questions may be upsetting especially if you have bad memories of the school fires. However, should you get upset you will be referred to a counselor for help. The counselling services will be provided free of charge.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this study you will be contributing towards the understanding of why students resort to setting school buildings on fire and help in preventing such incidents in future.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

At the end of the interview, each participant will receive a stipend of Kshs. 3000 (R378) to cover transport and lunch costs.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of anonymously reporting the proceedings of the group discussions. No real names will be mentioned in any publications based on this study. Participants will be referred to as Parent 1, Parent 2, etc. All participants will be required to also maintain confidentiality and not divulge the group discussions to anyone outside the group.

The information collected will not be released to any other party. It will only be analysed by me with the help of my supervisor. You have a right to review the audio recordings after the interviews if you wish to. Once the study is completed the audio recordings will be held in custody by the researcher and destroyed later in accordance with Stellenbosch University guidelines for ethical research.

I will not disclose the information we discuss with anyone and at the beginning of the interview I will ask everyone in the group to maintain confidentiality. However, I cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the information we discuss confidential.

Please sign below that you understand that the researcher cannot guarantee that everyone in the group will keep discussions confidential.

_____

Name of participant

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Date**

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. This may happen if a participant fails to maintain confidentiality or fails to adhere to group rules and etiquette or threatens the well-being of other participants. Any information gathered from the participant will not be used in the study and it will be destroyed immediately.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact: Hildah Oburu through email: hildahbo@yahoo.com Tel: +254 734 129294 or Prof. Leslie Swartz through email: lswartz@sun.ac.za Tel: +27 82 4593559

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If

you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at Stellenbosch University's Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant]* by [*name of relevant person]* in English and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is]* in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject]* was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Subject/Participant **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant]* and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative]. [H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English*.*

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator **Date**

As the researcher, I would like to record all sessions using a digital voice recorder. This will help me get accurate information about what has been said. I will not give the recording to anyone other than a professional transcriber and my supervisor, Prof Swartz. Please sign that you agree to be audio recorded.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

(Consent Form for Teachers in a school that experienced arson –Group interviews)

Title of Study: Social representations of the burning of boys' secondary schools in Kenya in 2016

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Hildah Oburu, PhD candidate, from the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will be used in writing the PhD dissertation and research papers. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a teacher in a boys' school where students set buildings on fire in 2016.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is seeking to find out your understanding of the burning of schools as well as what you think about the burning of schools by students.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in group discussions with other teachers (both male and female). The discussions will be guided by me but you will be allowed to speak freely. The interviews will take about two hours. The interviews will be conducted in the school compound or in a location near the school. The discussions will be audio recorded so that I can analyse them later to write up the dissertation.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The interviews will contain questions about the school fires of 2016. But some questions may be upsetting especially if you have bad memories of the school fires. However, should you get upset you will be referred to a counselor for help. The counseling services will be provided free of charge.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this study you will be contributing towards the understanding of why students resort to setting school buildings on fire and help in preventing such incidents in future.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

At the end of the interview, each participant will receive a stipend of Kshs. 5000 (R640) to cover transport and lunch costs.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality

will be maintained by means of anonymously reporting the proceedings of the group discussions. No real names will be mentioned in any publications based on this study. Participants will be referred to as Teacher1, Teacher 2, etc. All participants will be required to also maintain confidentiality and not divulge the group discussions to anyone outside the group.

The information collected will not be released to any other party. It will only be analysed by me with the help of my supervisor. You have a right to review the audio recordings after the interviews if you wish to. Once the study is completed the audio recordings will be held in custody by the researcher and destroyed later in accordance with Stellenbosch University guidelines for ethical research.

I will not disclose the information we discuss with anyone and at the beginning of the interview I will ask everyone in the group to maintain confidentiality. However, I cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the information we discuss confidential.

Please sign below that you understand that the researcher cannot guarantee that everyone in the group will keep discussions confidential.

_____

Name of participant

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Date**

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. This may happen if a participant fails to maintain confidentiality or fails to adhere to group rules and etiquette. Any information gathered from the participant will not be used in the study and it will be destroyed immediately.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact: Hildah Oburu through email: hildahbo@yahoo.com Tel: +254 734 129294 or Prof. Leslie Swartz through email: lswartz@sun.ac.za Tel: +27 82 4593559

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at Stellenbosch University's Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant]* by [*name of relevant person]* in English and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is]* in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject]* was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Subject/Participant **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant]* and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative]. [H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English*.*

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator **Date**

As the researcher, I would like to record all sessions using a digital voice recorder. This will help me get accurate information about what has been said. I will not give the recording to anyone other than a professional transcriber and my supervisor, Prof Swartz. Please sign that you agree to be audio recorded.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

Appendix E2: Minor Assent Forms

	STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

(Assent form for students in a school that experienced arson- Group Interviews)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Social representations of the burning of boys' secondary schools in Kenya in 2016

RESEARCHERS NAME(S): Hildah Bochere Oburu

ADDRESS: 27 Eikenwaters, Langenhoven Street, Stellenbosch (South Africa) or Box 18050-00100, Nairobi

CONTACT NUMBER: +27 74 3229441/ +254 721 833551/ +254 734 129294

What is RESEARCH*?*

Research is something we do find **NEW KNOWLEDGE** about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about children and teenagers and the things that affect their lives, their schools, their families and their health. We do this to try and make the world a better place!

What is this research project all about?

This research is about what you think about the burning of schools that happened in 2016

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

You have been invited to participate in this research because you are a student in a school where students set buildings on fire. What you think about the school fire can help us understand what makes students set school buildings on fire.

Who is doing the research?

I am a lecturer at the University of Nairobi. I teach Psychology. Right now I am a PhD student at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Because I teach Psychology at the School of Education to student teachers, this study will be very useful to my teaching. A better understanding of the burning

of schools will help me train teachers better and equip them with necessary skills needed to manage the problem of school fires.

What will happen to me in this study?

You will participate in a group discussion with other students. I will guide a discussion of the school fires of 2016 by asking a few questions to help us discuss your thoughts and feelings about the school fires. We will also talk about how the school fires affected you or those close to you and other people in the school community

Can anything bad happen to me?

No. Nothing bad will happen to you but some questions may upset you especially if you have bad memories of the school fire. If this happens, you will be referred to a counsellor who will help you deal with any negative feelings you may have. The counselling services will be provided free of charge.

Can anything good happen to me?

Not very directly but what we will discuss will help us understand why students set buildings on fire and therefore find ways of preventing this from happening in future. You will be given a snack at the end of the interview.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

No one will know that you were in the study. I will only discuss what we will talk about in my report without identifying who specifically said what. I will keep all our discussions confidential and at the beginning of the interview I will ask everyone to maintain confidentiality. However, I cannot guarantee that everyone will keep our discussions confidential.

Please sign below that you understand that the researcher cannot guarantee that everyone in the group will keep discussions confidential.

_____

Name of child

_____ _____

Signature of child **Date**

Who can I talk to about the study?

You can talk to your parents and teachers. You can also contact me through email: hildahbo@yahoo.com Tel: +254 734 129294 or my supervisor Prof. Leslie Swartz through email: lswartz@sun.ac.za Tel: +27 82 4593559

What if I do not want to do this?

No one will force you to participate in the study. You can decide not to participate.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES NO

Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?

YES NO

_____ _____

Signature of Child Date

As the researcher, I would like to record all sessions using a digital voice recorder. This will help me get accurate information about what has been said. I will not give the recording to anyone other than a professional transcriber and my supervisor Prof Swartz. Please sign that you agree to be audio recorded.

_____ _____

Signature of Child Date

	STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

(Assent form for students in a school that did not experience arson- Group Interviews)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Social representations of the burning of boys' secondary schools in Kenya in 2016

RESEARCHERS NAME(S): Hildah Bochere Oburu

ADDRESS: 27 Eikenwaters, Langenhoven Street, Stellenbosch (South Africa) or Box 18050-00100, Nairobi

CONTACT NUMBER: +27 74 3229441/ +254 721 833551/ +254 734 129294

What is RESEARCH*?*

Research is something we do find **NEW KNOWLEDGE** about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about children and teenagers and the things that affect their lives, their schools, their families and their health. We do this to try and make the world a better place!

What is this research project all about?

This research is about what you think about the burning of schools that happened in 2016

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

You have been invited to participate in this research because you are a student in a school where students did not set buildings on fire. What you think about the school fires in other schools can help us understand what makes students set school buildings on fire. The reasons why students in your school did not set buildings on fire will be especially useful.

Who is doing the research?

I am a lecturer at the University of Nairobi. I teach Psychology. Right now I am a PhD student at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Because I teach Psychology at the School of Education to student teachers, this study will be very useful to my teaching. A better understanding of the burning of schools will help me train teachers better and equip them with necessary skills needed to manage the problem of school fires.

What will happen to me in this study?

You will participate in a group discussion with other students. I will guide a discussion of the school fires of 2016 by asking a few questions to help us discuss your thoughts and feelings about the school fires. We will also talk about how the school fires affected you or those close to you and other people in the school community

Can anything bad happen to me?

No. Nothing bad will happen to you but some questions may upset you especially if you have bad memories of the school fire. If this happens, you will be referred to a counsellor who will help you deal with any negative feelings you may have. The counselling services will be provided free of charge.

Can anything good happen to me?

Not very directly but what we will discuss will help us understand why students set buildings on fire and therefore find ways of preventing this from happening in future. You will be given a snack at the end of the interview.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

No one will know that you were in the study. I will only discuss what we will talk about in my report without identifying who specifically said what. I will keep all our discussions confidential and at the beginning of the interview I will ask everyone to maintain confidentiality. However, I cannot guarantee that everyone will keep our discussions confidential.

Please sign below that you understand that the researcher cannot guarantee that everyone in the group will keep discussions confidential.

_____

Name of child

_____ _____

Signature of child **Date**

Who can I talk to about the study?

You can talk to your parents and teachers. You can also contact me through email: hildahbo@yahoo.com Tel: +254 734 129294 or my supervisor Prof. Leslie Swartz through email: lswartz@sun.ac.za Tel: +27 82 4593559

What if I do not want to do this?

No one will force you to participate in the study. You can decide not to participate.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES NO

Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?

YES NO

_____ _____

Signature of Child Date

As the researcher, I would like to record all sessions using a digital voice recorder. This will help me get accurate information about what has been said. I will not give the recording to anyone other than a professional transcriber and my supervisor Prof Swartz. Please sign that you agree to be audio recorded.

_____ _____

Signature of Child Date

Appendix E3: Parental/ Legal Guardian Consent Forms

(PARENTAL CONSENT FORMS)

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

(Parental Consent form for students in schools that experienced arson- Group interviews)

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN CONSENT FOR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I would like to invite your child to take part in a study conducted by me, Hildah Oburu, from the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University. Your child will be invited as a possible participant because he attends a boys' secondary school that experienced an incident of arson in 2016.

10. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is about the school fires that occurred in 2016 and the aim is to find out your son's thoughts and feelings about the school fires.

11. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF MY CHILD?

If you consent to your child taking part in this study, the researcher will then approach the child for their assent to take part in the study. If the child agrees to take part in the study, he will be asked to participate in a group discussion with other students. I will guide the discussion by asking questions about school fires in general and the one that occurred in your son's school in particular. The discussions will be held within the school compound. Each group discussion will take approximately two hours.

12. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Nothing bad will happen to your son. But sometimes interview questions can upset participants especially if they have bad memories of the incident being discussed. Should this happen your son will be referred to a qualified counselor to help him deal with the bad feelings.

13. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO THE CHILD OR TO THE SOCIETY

Your son's participation will contribute towards the understanding of why students resort to setting buildings on fire and contribute towards finding ways of preventing school fires in future.

14. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

At the end of the interview, all participants in the study including your son will be given a snack.

15. PROTECTION OF YOUR AND YOUR CHILD'S INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY

Any information you or your child will share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you or your child will be protected. This will be done by reporting the findings of this study anonymously. All participants will be given codes such as Student 1 in school X or Student C in school W, etc. All

participants in the group interviews will be required to maintain confidentiality and not reveal discussions with anyone outside the group.

The information will only be used by me with the help of my supervisor. It will not be released to any other person or agency. The information will be used to write up my PhD thesis and in the publishing of research papers. In all cases, your son's identity will be protected.

The interview discussions will be audio taped but the audio recordings will be destroyed after five years.

16. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You and your child can choose whether to be part of this study or not. If you consent to your child taking part in the study, please note that your child may choose to withdraw or decline participation at any time without any consequence. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw your child from this study if the child fails to maintain confidentiality or if the child's actions threaten the well-being of other group members.

17. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me through email: hildahbo@yahoo.com Tel: +254 734 129294 or my supervisor Prof. Leslie Swartz through email: lswartz@sun.ac.za Tel: +27 82 4593559

18. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Your child may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Neither you nor your child are waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your or your child's rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at Stellenbosch University's Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN OF THE CHILD- PARTICIPANT

As the parent/legal guardian of the child, I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy and the confidentiality and use of the information have been explained.

By signing below, I _____ *(name of parent)* agree that the researcher may approach my child to take part in this research study, as conducted by _____ *(name of principal investigator).*

_____ _____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian **Date**

DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the **principal investigator,** I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the parent/legal guardian. I also declare that the parent/legal guardian was encouraged and given ample time to ask any questions.

_____ _____

Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**